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Things New & Old,

A

GOSPEL MAGAZINE,

WITH PAPERS FOR THE FLOCK OF GOD.



"Christ is all."—Col. iii. 11.



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Things New and Old.

GRACE MEETING AND BLESSING HELPLESS SINNERS.

"And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth : but the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters ; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha, which he spake." (2 Kings ii. 19-22.)

THAT man is a sinner most will admit. Few will deny it. Those who believe there is a God know it is true. Some are accused by conscience, others by comparing themselves with their pious neighbours ; and others by scriptural instruction. Open, flagrant sins are, in this country, generally condemned. Morality moreover, is found by experience to be a better thing even for this life than vice ; hence, on the ground of expediency, as well as conscience, gross sins are shunned by many.

Much is said in scripture about man's practical

sinfulness and rebellion against God, much about his unclean and corrupting ways. The cross of Christ gives us the climax of man's enmity against God, as well as shews the abounding of divine grace. There man's activity in evil was fully manifested.

Perhaps there is scarcely a sin that man is capable of, God has not noted in His holy word; which shews how thoroughly He knew what was in man. As to sins then, in their enormity and foulness, many have no question, for they are often acted round about us; but man's *entire helplessness* toward God is a truth which we fear few will admit. The scripture statement that man is "without strength" is at direct variance with many minds, who think themselves both competent to worship and serve God, as well as to exercise a judgment on divine things. It is this truth which this brief record of one of Elisha's miracles in the name of Jehovah strikingly illustrates.

No doubt the great point in it is the readiness and power of God, in grace, to bring in healing in Israel, where all is death and barrenness. Elijah had been God's faithful witness to the nation's terrible departure from God. Both king and people were such transgressors, and the prophet so felt himself alone that he said, "I only am left." The prophet's testimony to the people's departure from God, He confirmed in translating him from earth to heaven. A man now had ascended into

heaven, after crossing Jordan, the river of death and judgment. This Elisha saw and knew to be the secret of his power. The first thing, therefore, after this, we find Elisha conscious of, was, that Jericho was the place of barrenness and death ; but he knew also that there was power in God to heal, and that when the people took their true place of owning such to be their condition, He would heal. But mark, this is the first action of Jehovah's faithful servant for the earth's blessing, after the man had ascended into heaven. The time will come when the people of Israel will say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." We know it is also written concerning our Lord's coming again to this earth, "Unto you that fear my name [a remnant in Israel], shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." (Mal. iv. 2.)

But as we have said, this little incident illustrates the state of man as a helpless sinner, and the way in which God is now in grace bringing in healing and blessing. We have not represented here the gross sins of which man is capable, but his helplessness, his inability to bear fruit, the absence of spiritual life because he is dead in trespasses and in sins. It is solemnly true that "all have sinned," and that the heart of man "is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked ;" but it is equally true that men are "dead in sins," "without strength," and not bringing forth any fruit to God.

The acknowledgment to the man of God was “The situation is pleasant, but the water is naught, and the ground barren.” (Ver. 19.) The circumstances were agreeable. The sun shed upon it his cheering rays, and showers descended from heaven, fructifying seasons passed in proper succession, but there was *no fruit*. All who passed by, while noticing the pleasantness of the situation, could not fail to be struck with its perpetual barrenness. The sun’s rays, and the showers from heaven made no difference; it was still said, “the water is naught, and the ground barren.”

And such is man. His circumstances are often pleasant; he is surrounded with kindly influences, providential mercies, and untold comforts and advantages, yet, alas! as to his actings toward God, all is really a blank; there is no life, and consequently no fruit. With all the busy movements of religious activity, men have to learn, if they come under divine teaching, that “the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Rom. viii. 7, 8.) The unconverted man being “without strength,” and “dead in sins,” lives on earth as “having no hope, and without God in the world.” How very solemn! He may be a nominal professor of Christianity, surrounded with exemplary Christians, and exposed to the influence of some of their privileges, yet is he a fruitless professor, like a

barren fig-tree. He may even take the place of leading and instructing others, and bolster himself up on his educational accomplishments, yet, because he is not born of God, he has not life, and is but the blind leading the blind, and both falling into the ditch. He may be as diligent and scrupulous as a Pharisee in his endeavours to benefit his fellow creatures, and use every means and appliance within his power to ameliorate their distress, and, withal, be “dead in sins,” and bearing no fruit acceptable unto God. There is no life, and therefore no fruit—not as some would have it, a little life, and a little fruit, for, though their circumstances may be pleasant, “the water is naught, and the ground barren.”

Many will allow that man is sinful, and that he can do nothing unless *assisted* by God ; as if man had some innate power of holiness which only needed help. But such is far from the truth. It is not help from God, but life which he needs ; for “ Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And as to fruit-bearing, Jesus taught even His own dear and blessed disciples, who had life, that they must abide in Him even as a branch abides in the vine, as their alone source of power and blessing, or they could not bear fruit ; for said He, “ without me ye can do nothing.”

It was not then at Jericho a question of digging, or dressing, or of irrigating the land, or, in any

sense, improving the old condition of things, but the bringing in of something entirely new. The gospel of the grace of God is not an improvement of the Jews' religion, but a new order of things altogether ; for the gospel makes no demands on man in order to be blessed, but brings to him freely everything that he needs. It is not do and live, but live and do. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Yes, since Jesus rose from among the dead, ascended into heaven, and sent down the Holy Ghost, the glad-tidings of peace made, and redemption accomplished have been declared. The prophet says, "Bring me a new cruse and put salt therein." It was something *new*, for it was meeting the need in pure grace ; and to illustrate it a *new* cruse must be brought. Whatever salt may teach us, it is clear first, that "salt is good ;" secondly, that it has "savour," and can season or preserve ; thirdly, it was to be mixed with the sacrifices—"with all thine offerings, thou shalt offer salt." (See Luke xiv. 34 ; Lev. ii. 13.) Its goodness, savoury qualities, and association with all the offerings, clearly tells us of the grace of God to us in Christ Jesus. "For by grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast." (Eph. ii. 8, 9.) How wonderful that God has thus come out to us in this matchless way of grace, and thus completely and for ever saved us ; for "God commendeth his love

toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.)

But it is not the knowledge of the letter of scripture, important as it is, but the application to the soul of the grace and savour of Christ that man needs for healing. It is when the Holy Ghost brings Christ who died on the cross to save sinners, in all the sin-cleansing efficacy of His blood, deep down into the heart, that souls have life, realise peace, and are strengthened to bring forth fruit. "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb. ix. 14.) And so we read, that Elisha "went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith Jehovah, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more dearth and barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake." (Vers. 20-22.) Observe here the two things in this illustration which are often presented to us in the scripture for peace and rest of soul: the work of Christ, and the word of God. The salt was applied to the spring, and then it was said, "Thus saith Jehovah, I have healed these waters." *The ground of peace* is the work of Christ on the cross—His blood—"having made peace by the blood of his cross," and the sole *authority for peace*, the word of God, and therefore it must be only on the principle of faith. The word of God declares that "Whoso-

ever believeth on him [the Lord Jesus Christ] shall receive remission of sins," and "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Acts x. ; Heb. x. 17.) Thus the person who takes his place by faith before God, as a helpless and guilty sinner, looks to Christ as the object of faith, reposes on the blood of Christ as the ground of peace, and rests on the unalterable word of God as the authority for peace ; such are cleansed from all sin, are justified from all things, are children of God, and "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

What saith the reader to these things ? Have you taken your true place before God of a guilty, helpless sinner ? And have you so reposed on the blood of Christ, as to be assured by the word of God that you are cleansed from all sin, justified from all things ? If so, the language of your heart has been, when looking unto Jesus—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall,
Thou art my Lord and righteousness,
My Saviour, and my all."

CHRIST now is risen and at the right hand of God, in virtue of what He did on the cross for us ; and He has sent down the Holy Ghost, "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

PLAIN PAPERS ON THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

JUDGMENT.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." (Acts xvii. 30, 31.)

REPENTANCE and forgiveness now, or judgment hereafter, such is the unalterable sentence of the word of God. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Yes, God must be faithful to the claims of the atoning value of the death of the Lord Jesus. It is not He may, but in righteousness He will—yea, to be righteous He must forgive us our sins. Is Jesus your Saviour, or will He be your Judge? "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." The word of God is most distinct on the question of judgment, as the lot of man, as such. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

There is only one ground of exemption, and when we think of the everlasting issues, is it not of the utmost moment to ascertain what that ground of exemption from judgment is? Is it not on the sole ground that the Lord Jesus hath once "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself? And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 26-28.) This is in perfect harmony with the blessed statement of the Lord Jesus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and *shall not come* into condemnation [or judgment], but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.)

Thus those who hear the word of the Lord Jesus, and believe God that sent Him, shall not come into judgment. He was offered to bear their sins; God sent Him for this very purpose. The offerings of the law could never put sins away. "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." (Heb. x.) But when the blood of bulls and of goats could not possibly take away sins, then the Lord Jesus came, for the very purpose of putting away sin, by the offering of Himself once. And "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." "For by one offering he hath

perfected for ever [that is, in perpetuity] them that are sanctified." The Holy Ghost is a witness of all this. Now mark, this ground of exemption from judgment for sins is wholly of God ; the will of God is the very source of it. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." The One that has accomplished this will is the Eternal Son. The One that bears witness is the Holy Ghost. What a ground this is for the soul to rest upon ! Instead of judgment, God says, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Yes, thus as death and judgment are the common lot of man, so "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Instead of judgment, then, "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Have you heard the word of Jesus ? Do you believe God who sent Him ? That it was the will of God that the Son should come into this world for the purpose of bearing the sins of many—that is, of all who believe Him—and therefore of putting away your sins, if you do believe God, by the one sacrifice of Himself ? Does your soul rest on the fact that He has offered Himself thus once ? and that what the blood of bulls and goats could not do, He has done once for ever ? What ! your sins put away for ever ? so put away to the glory of God, that He has sat down on the right hand of God ? Oh, to think that God cannot in righteousness remember one of our sins and iniquities against us ! Justified from

all things, so that He says, “and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” Can He, then, who died for our sins, and was raised for our justification, after all come again to judge *us* for those very sins? No, He comes without sin, that is, without a question of sin as against us; it is “unto salvation.”

The righteousness of God makes this impossible. He who died for our sins, who finished the work that the Father gave Him to do, claims not only our everlasting justification, but He says, “Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.” He who thus speaks could say, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent *me*.”

Who shall judge the believer for his sins? God is their Justifier. His righteousness is revealed in justifying them, by the redemption they have freely through Christ Jesus, even through His blood. Shall Jesus judge them, who is coming to judge the world in righteousness? Why, He came the first time for the very purpose of glorifying God in taking our sins away; and He has done it. He is set down for ever. We are perfected for ever; our sins and iniquities to be remembered no more.

Judicially there is nothing to judge now—“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. viii. 1.) All has been

judged, sins, and sin, in and by that one sacrifice for sin. Now, even amongst men, if a man's liabilities have been met by another, discharged, and the receipt given, no righteous judge could bring such a person into court again. Can God, then, be unrighteous, and bring the justified believer in Christ into judgment? Impossible. So that if we look at that terrible day of wrath and fiery indignation, when the Lord Jesus shall come to judge the world, that is, the living nations of this earth; when all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; we know that, before this awful day of wrath and everlasting punishment on the despisers of the mercy of God, all believers will have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. They will appear with Him when He comes to judge, and, as His joint-heirs, they will be seated with Him to judge the world. (Col. iii. 4; 1 Thess. iii. 13; iv. 14; Jude 14.) Nothing is more clearly taught in holy scripture than this, that instead of the saints being raised to stand in a general judgment at the coming of Christ, they will come with Him to judge the world. (Rev. xix. 14; xx. 4.) Not only will the Lord be on His throne, but John says, "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of

Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

And the redeemed church, the Lamb's wife, having reigned with Christ in the glory of God a thousand years; then takes place the judgment of the wicked dead. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened," &c. (Rev. xx. 11.) Yes, it is appointed unto men (not all men) once to die, and after death the judgment. These are they, the rest of the dead, that lived not again until the thousand years were finished. (Heb. ix. 27; Rev. xx. 5.) Oh, how terrible to be raised to stand before the great white throne! There is no deliverance then; no more sacrifice for sins; no escape. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Whilst most assuredly believers, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and for a millennium reigning in glory with Christ, can never stand, after all this, before that terrible throne; yet "the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake of fire which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Oh, reader, how do you stand with God? Do

not dream of deliverance then, if you reject the salvation of God now. Salvation is perfect, it is a great salvation now. Judgment on the rejectors will be great and terrible then.

Have you, then, believed God in sending His beloved Son? and that that Holy One has been made a sacrifice for your sins? Have you repented, that is, have you, and do you, judge yourself your sins, and sin in the presence of such righteousness and divine love? Do you believe the righteousness of God in justifying you from all sins by the atoning death of Jesus? Do you believe God raised Him from the dead for your justification, and to be your everlasting righteousness? Then rest in the absolute certainty of those precious words of Jesus. You hear His word; you believe God that sent Him; then believe what He says, "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment." Oh, how sweet to say from the heart, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. i. 5.)

No, instead of the believer looking for judgment, he looks for the Lord Jesus the second time, without sin unto salvation. Thus even now, can we sing with joyful hearts, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

who hath delivered us from the power of darkness : and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son : in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” (Col. i. 12.) Some of our readers may ask, If all believers who have passed from death to life are thus accepted in Christ, all their sins forgiven, and justified from all things ; now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus : shall not be brought into judgment for sins put away by the blood of Jesus ; then what is the meaning of that scripture, “ For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ ? ” And again, “ So everyone of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Rom. xiv., read 10–13.) And also again, “ Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear [or be manifested] before the judgment-seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Cor. v. 9–11.) Now clearly this cannot mean that we shall be judged for our sins, and dealt with according to our sins done in the body, as, in that case, not one could be saved. And besides, this would contradict the scriptures we have been considering, which is impossible. God cannot contradict Himself.

If we carefully read the context of these scriptures, we find it is not a question of our sins, or of our being accepted in Christ ; that is all settled for the

believer for eternity. His redemption is eternal. In Romans xiv. 12 it is a question of not judging our brethren in matters of eating, observing days, &c. The blessed Lord will make no mistake when we all stand before His Beemah seat of reward. In the latter case, in 2 Corinthians v., it is we should earnestly labour, not to be accepted in Him—that we are now through grace—but to be acceptable to Him. We shall *receive*, or be rewarded, according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad. As in another scripture, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. . . . If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved ; yet so as by fire.” Read the whole of 1 Corinthians iii.

Thus our bodies being the temples of the Holy Ghost, we may assuredly both know and do the things that are good and acceptable to Christ, and according to His judgment receive the reward. But if we build badly, do the things that are bad in His sight, however highly these things may be spoken of amongst men, we shall suffer loss as to reward, yet be saved so as by fire. The contrast between Abraham and Lot may illustrate this ; the one walking with God a pilgrim and stranger, the other dwelling in Sodom—saved from judgment so as by fire.

What a deeply important subject this is ! How

many believers, like Lot, are earnestly labouring to reform Sodom! Let us sit down in solemn meditation with the word of God before us, not questioning our acceptance in Christ, if believers. Surely this would be unbelief. But let us ask, what are we doing that is pleasing to Him who bought us with His precious blood—what will meet with His approval and reward when we meet Him as Saviour in the air? Oh, that we may test everything by this, Is it pleasing to our Lord? To labour for this as the apostle laboured. We are persuaded this would have the effect of leading us to abandon very much that is done in the body, as the mere religious fashion of the day; because we know it will not pass for good in that day so near at hand. Neither will that which is pleasing in His sight lose its reward. But let us not commit the fatal mistake of confounding this with judgment of our sins, but “wait for his Son from heaven which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

DOES FAITH GO BEFORE REPENTANCE?

A GREAT deal has been written on repentance. Various definitions are given, and different conclusions arrived at: not a few are still inquiring concerning it, but, what saith the scripture?

Some continue to define repentance, according to an old tradition, as “sorrow for sin;” but such

have often to find out, as a matter of fact, that persons who have had much distress of mind because of some striking sin they have committed, have shewn themselves to be entire strangers to the glad-tidings of divine grace and of repentance toward God. Others, not satisfied with this definition of repentance, have declared it to be "a change of mind;" but when an immoral person has been seen to become moral, a drunkard become a man of sober habits; a man of loose ways become practically chaste and refined; an irreligious man become so outwardly religious as to contend that God ought to be served, thus simply indicating a change of mind upon the subject of sin, without any idea of repentance toward God, they have hesitated to abide by their former conclusion that repentance is simply a change of mind. There are others who have held that repentance is the judgment of self and its ways, according to God, which is much nearer the truth; and this, as far as it goes, cannot fail to commend itself to the thoughtful Christian.

But a question still remains open as to whether faith precedes repentance, or only accompanies, or follows it. Those who contend that repentance precedes faith, forget that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi. 6), and are driven to the untruthful conclusion that, after all, man is not "dead in trespasses and in sins," but capable of doing something good apart from the operation of'

divine grace in the soul. This would controvert God's own conclusion, after He had tested man in various ways during thousands of years, that "they which are in the flesh cannot please God."

The truth is, that while "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent," and the Saviour commanded that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached *in his name*," we are also told that it is the goodness of God which leadeth to repentance. (Luke xxiv. 46, 47; Rom. ii. 4.) The soul therefore that is truly acted on by the gospel, is brought under the reality of the unutterable grace of God in Christ Jesus, and this goodness leads to repentance. When this is the case, no doubt such "judge themselves and their ways in the presence of God according to His word," and in them there is also "a change of mind," as well as "sorrow for sin;" there will be "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts xx. 21.)

If then it is the goodness of God which leadeth to repentance, and that the natural man is incapable of bringing forth fruit to God, it can no longer be questioned that faith goes before repentance. But, about this, we cannot more clearly bring the subject before our readers than by quoting the words of a well-known writer on the subject.

"All who know what grace is, believe that faith precedes repentance, and everything else which is good and right in man. Otherwise he would have

what is good before he believed the truth at all ; he would have it without God. And, as to repentance, substantially the whole moral change, the essence and substance of his return to God would have been effected without any truth at all. For, if he repents through the truth, he must believe the truth in order to repent. Nothing can be more absurd than putting repentance before faith ; for a man then repents believing nothing at all. The word of God has not reached his soul, good or bad ; for, if it has, he is an infidel, or he believes it, and it has thus wrought repentance. That a man does not understand redemption and salvation before repentance ; be it so. Certainly, he does not really know it for himself. But that does not say faith does not precede it. . . . How does divine grace operate ? Is it not by the word ; by the presentation of divinely given objects of faith ? If faith is not the source of repentance—that is, in the moral sense precedes it, then the vital change in the state of a man's soul is without faith, without grace ; or grace operates without any revelation of a divine object. The eye must be opened to turn men from darkness to light ; is it opened on vanity, or on God's revelation of Himself in Christ ? Hence I find that repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in *His name*. Am I to believe that the repentance was to be wrought in unbelief in that name, or by faith in it ? So in John xvi. ‘ He shall convince the world of sin, because they

believe not on me.' And Peter, accordingly, having announced Jesus, charges them with having crucified Him ; and then they are pricked to the heart. And then he tells them the way of escape. Philip goes down to Samaria to preach Christ to them. Did they repent through faith in it or not? The goodness of God leads man to repentance. (Rom. ii. 4.) Is there no goodness to be believed in in this work ? What led the poor sinful woman in tears to the feet of Jesus ? She heard that Jesus was in the house. Satan, to bring in lust and sin, had first undermined confidence in God. God, he insisted, had kept back just what would make man like Himself. God is manifest in flesh, and moves in grace through the wretchedness of man, shewing grace in Himself, abounding over sin to win back the confidence of sinful man, in spite of, yea through the burden and shame of sin to Himself, while surely warning him of the consequences of abiding in it. The poor woman had felt this ; she could go to God thus manifested (not explain it all, I dare say), and shewing her to herself too in the light which she dared not to any human heart. She loved much. When she heard that Jesus was in the house, she came. What business had she there ? When God and grace were there, for her He filled the place in His beauty and grace. He was alone for her soul. It is brokenness and renewed feeling in life fitted to the grace that was revealed in Him. God was there

for it. That was *all*. The rest was all human vanity. Christ had a claim which made nothing of all the rest. Its glitter had found its truth in her sorrow; but Christ met what she was. She knew, what the Pharisee did not, that grace and that God, morally speaking, for she might not know it doctrinally, was there. She did *not* know forgiveness; but repentance had been produced by the revelation of God in Christ to her soul. And Christ had pronounced the forgiveness, and told her to go in peace. Now here we get faith, repentance, and forgiveness in their divine order. Now more clearly preached, no doubt; but not otherwise. Peter preaches Christ. There is faith, that works repentance; for the heart had been enmity to the Christ believed in, and then comes the knowledge of forgiveness through His work. Faith, then, according to scripture, does go before repentance. Peace may not, and surely will not. . . . Repentance is a much deeper thing than is thought. It is the judgment of the new man in divine light and grace in all that he who repents has been or done in flesh. Law may be the means of bringing the soul to it; but though salutary, it is made for the unrighteous. The full knowledge of Christ gives a *far* deeper hatred of sin. And such is the Holy Ghost's way; all else, if true, is imperfect. 'He shall convince of sin because they believe not on me.' To have hated good, to have seen no beauty in Christ to desire Him: a

nature which could do this is even worse than the lusts which the spirituality of the law so justly condemns. Lawless, law-breaking, and God-hating ; such is the flesh's character in scripture, and the order of its manifestation for shewing what sin is. Hence, repentance will, in one sense, deepen all one's life, as the knowledge of God grows. It is not a quantum of sorrow, nor even a perception of separation from God by sin. That leads to it. It is the soul of man judging divinely of sin, and that, in the consciousness it had been self, when God is known in grace. At any rate in some measure.”



PROPIKITATION AND SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN speaking of “propitiation,” we could not say that “Christ has propitiated for the sins of the whole world,” as some have stated, because we do not find it in scripture. It is blessedly true that “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world.” The words, “the sins of” are in italics, because not in the text. (1 John ii. 2.) If He had propitiated for *the sins of* the whole world, then all the world would be saved, which we know is not the truth. But His being a propitiation, or mercy-seat, available to all men, is a different idea from His having propitiated God for the sins of the whole world. *Propitiation* is the Godward side of Christ’s sacrifice. With it God is satisfied. Its value is infinite.

No doubt Jesus is “the Saviour of the world,” both of Jew and Gentile, and that He “died for *all*,” “gave himself a ransom for *all*,” “tasted death for *every man*,” so that the gospel is preached to every creature, and His work available to all, on the principle of faith, who avail themselves of it. “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (See 1 John iv. 14 ; 2 Cor. v. 15 ; 1 Tim. ii. 6 ; Heb. ii. 9 ; Rev. xxii. 17.)

When, however, the subject in scripture is sin-bearing, the language used is not all, but many. His blood was “shed for *many* for the remission of sins;” He bare “the sins of *many*.” When writing to believers, the inspired statements are, “He bare *our* sins,” “He died for *our* sins,” and “He was made sin for *us*;” this is something more than *propitiation*, it is *substitution*—the spotless Son of God in death under the judgment of God for sin—the death of the cross—for others. *Substitution* is the actual judgment of personal sins and iniquity on another, and thus gone for ever. The believer therefore can say, “I am crucified with Christ . . . he loved me and gave himself for me,” and washed me from my sins in His own blood. God too is so satisfied with the work of Jesus for us, that He says, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” (See Matt. xxvi. 28 ; Heb. ix. 28 ; 1 Pet. ii. 24 ; 1 Cor. xv. 3 ; 2 Cor. v. 21 ; Gal. ii. 20 ; Rev. i. v.)

CORRESPONDENCE.

1. Luton. A true and solemn sense of the Lord being in the midst of those who are gathered together unto His name, is indispensable for profit and blessing, and effectually excludes unholy intrusions. Where this is lacking, unbelieving contrivances easily come in ; where it is really known as the place of holiness as well as marvellous privilege, each member of the body of Christ is kept in his proper place and measure. Such will be solemnly exercised before the Lord, lest anything should be done unsuited to His presence, or dis honouring to His name.

When anyone is overtaken in a fault, those who are spiritual should endeavour to restore. All are not spiritual, and therefore not qualified for this important work. The spiritual will set about it prayerfully and self-judged ; and having taken the beam out of their own eye, will see clearly to take the mote out of the eye of another. (Read Gal. vi. 1.)

2. "C. J. H.,” Honiton. Your letter is to hand. We heartily thank you for your earnest desires and prayers on our behalf. May you be kept in the circle of divine, unchanging love !

3. Auchanblae. The paper is scarcely written with sufficient care for publication. Thanks for your most kind and encouraging letter. May the Lord's peace and blessing be with you !

4. "H. C. S." New Testament "prophets" were gifts from Christ in ascension for the edification of the body, the church, or assembly. (Eph. iv. 10-12.) The apostles and prophets were the foundation-stones of the assembly, so that we are said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles

and prophets." (Eph. ii. 20.) As the canon of scripture was not then complete, revelations were made to them to communicate to others; but after the assembly was really set up, and the mind of God fully given in scripture, we read no more of "prophets" exercising their gifts. Before this, when anything was revealed to another that sitteth by, the person speaking was to hold his peace. (1 Cor. xiv. 29, 30.) In a general sense, a person who prophesieth is one who speaks to edification, exhortation and comfort. The prophets being limited to two or three speaking at a meeting, seems to imply that more would not be for edification.

5. "J. B.," Whitby. Your question is a deeply interesting one. Is it not this? Do believers now gathered to Christ, as at the beginning, constitute a sect? Now, in one sense, it may be impossible to avoid the *appearance* of a sect, or to hinder others from regarding it as a sect. The Jews spake of the church of God as a sect. (Acts xxviii. 22.) There were different Jewish sects (Acts xxvi. 5); and there were different sects or schools of philosophers. Therefore the natural man could see no difference. They regarded the church of God as a sect.

Now the church is split up into so many sects, in direct opposition to the word of God, it surely becomes every Christian who has spiritual discernment to take a low place in confession and humiliation, owning the common ruin. But suppose the Spirit of God gathers, say twelve, believers in one town to the name and person of the LORD JESUS, the Head of His body, the church, as at the beginning; and there are, say, one hundred more Christians in the same town grieving the Spirit by

belonging to different sects. If the twelve pretend to be the church of God, this would be false, as each of the hundred and twelve are members of the one body of Christ, though only twelve seek to express that unity, however feebly. The difference is this, the twelve are only members of the body of Christ. The hundred are members of the one body, but are also members of some body of men, or sect. The twelve are no more a sect than the whole church of God was at the beginning. The point to be clear upon is this, that all believers are baptised by one Spirit into one body; but if any deny this by forming divisions, our path is clear in Romans xvi. 17. We must practise the truth of God to know its power.

6. "P.," Bath. It is a proof of unhealthiness of soul when an undue prominence is given to any particular part of the truth, especially when it concerns points neither vital nor fundamental, nor even practically connected with God's assembly. We judge that it is only when we are happy in the Lord we are able to consider and express ourselves as we ought concerning "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." You must excuse our entering further into the details of your letter, as controversy is not the object of this magazine.

With regard to "walking up to the light," while conscience is to be respected, it has often been truly said, that "a Christian should never go beyond his faith, or act below his conscience;" yet scripture does not speak of christian walk as "up to the light," but "in the light, as he is in the light," which is a very different idea.

Several replies stand over for our next issue, if the Lord will.

NINEVEH'S REPENTANCE.

"The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."—LUKE xi. 32.

SUCH is the testimony of the Lord Jesus to the effect of the short sermon of the unwilling preacher. "They repented at the preaching of Jonas." If we turn to this sermon, and mark its effects, as narrated by inspiration, following step by step the record, we shall there see both what repentance is, and also how faith did and must precede it. (Read Jonah iii.)

Every word in this chapter is striking. Jonah had gone down in figure into death, and come out of the grave of deep waters; the figure of the place the Lord Jesus took for us as our Substitute.

He was sent by the Lord the second time, "saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Mark, it was not to be a sermon of his own composing, or the suggestion of his own thoughts, but, "preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Oh, what different sermons we should have in this day, if the preacher's ear was opened to hear that voice saying, "Preach the preaching that I bid thee." Many a preacher would rise up

to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord; most unwilling would some be to declare the coming judgments on this ungodly world.

"So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord." How shall a man preach according unto the word of the Lord, unless he be sent? How is it there is so little effect from the finely composed and eloquently delivered sermons of this day? Perhaps the answer may be seen in this contrast. Here is the unwilling son of Amittai, sent according to the word of the Lord to preach unto this great city the preaching that the Lord bids him preach. "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey: and he cried, and said." Now let us listen to

JONAH'S SERMON.

"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." What a sermon! The English translation is in eight words. Not a word about repentance. Not a hope of mercy, or forgiveness, or sparing. This is the whole sermon, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The message of Jehovah was coming judgment, speedy overthrow. And the testimony of the Lord Jesus is, "They repented at the preaching of Jonas." But did they repent first, and then believe? or believe first, and this produce repentance? The answer could not be clearer or more decisive. The

immediate effect of this sermon of eight words on the scores of thousands of the people of Nineveh was this: "so the people of Nineveh BELIEVED God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."

How could they have done this if they had not believed God? Would they have proclaimed a fast? No, they would have treated Jonah as a lying impostor. It does not say they believed Jonah; but they believed God. They believed God, and repented at the preaching of Jonah.

All this, which the Lord calls repentance, is further explained as follows: "For word came unto the king of Nineveh." This is the power, the instrument, the Holy Ghost uses. "For word came unto the king." Has the word ever come unto your conscience? Until the word of God comes, man thinks himself king, that is, his own master. No doubt Saul thought himself such, as he rode with his attendants to Damascus. Oh, that word of God, coming judgment came unto the king. And is not the announcement of coming judgment the word of God to our readers?—we must have to do with God. Think of that book, what would it be to have every sin, of thought, of act, all, all laid bare, unpardonable? Not only that which we justly call vile and sinful; but that which we may have thought pleasing to God in our carnal state; we find, as Saul found it, to be the deepest

enmity to Christ. Oh, that the word of God may come home to the heart and conscience!

Oh, do think of the great white throne, and think of the lake of fire. God hath spoken. Do you believe Him? "For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes."

Yes, the sure effect of the word is to bring man from his throne. Look again at Saul: how helpless he lay, with his face in the dust. He came down from his throne. God has said, "The end of all flesh is come before me." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "For when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Think of those words, "without strength." Oh, how true. Oh, the first step when the word comes to the king is to bring him off his throne. Blessed effect of faith in God, to break one to pieces.

We will now look at the second step, as brought out in this scripture. "And he laid his robe from him." It was so again with Saul. He laid his robe from him. If any man had a robe worth keeping, he was the man. He says, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Phil. iii. 9.) Have you laid your robe, your righteousness, every hope of being able to

stand righteous before God by works of law, from you? This is not all.

The third step recorded is this—"and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes." This is deep, deep work in the soul. What an expression of self-abhorrence! Have you taken this place? The whole old man covered with sackcloth. This is not merely sorrow for sins we have committed. Repentance in Job's case was exactly the same. He did not say, I hate the sin I have committed; surely we should do this. But he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore *I abhor myself*, and repent in dust and ashes." God must be known, and believed, to produce this self-abhorrence. When God is thus known, instead of my own fancied righteousness, it is sackcloth and ashes. Which is it, beloved reader, with you? Are you trusting in your prayers, or doings, your own righteousness? or is all sackcloth and ashes? Paul accounted all his blamelessness as to the law as dung, compared with the righteousness of God in Christ. (Phil. iii.)

We will now notice the fourth step. "And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed nor drink water." Was not Saul's repentance again the same? Oh, what a proclamation in his awakened soul! "And

he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." Most assuredly a mere assent to the truths of the gospel is not the repentance of the scriptures. Have you thus merely assented? or, have you ever been truly awakened to the awful nature of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment? Has that mighty proclamation been made in every recess of your soul, like the streets of Nineveh, so that your eyes and mouth have been fast closed to everything this world and Satan can present to you? Oh, for a mighty work of the Spirit, to bring souls thus before God in brokenness of heart!

And, further, the fifth step. "But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God." "Behold he prayeth" was another sure sign of Saul's repentance. Hearken to the cry of the awakened jailer, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Oh, have you ever cried out, in the bitterness of your soul, mightily unto God? Be not, oh, be not deceived! These are the inspired marks of repentance.

Neither must we omit the sixth step in the words of the king. "Yea, let them turn everyone from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." Would that have been true repentance, had Saul continued to persecute the saints unto death? or would it have been true repentance in this case, had Nineveh continued to practise the fearful wickedness of an eastern imperial city?

Neither is that true repentance in any one, who, whilst assenting to the truths of the gospel, continues to practise iniquity.

Is it not clear, then, that if all this could possibly take place before faith and divine life in the soul, then man would save himself? No, they believed God, faith takes hold of God. Nothing could be more striking than the divine order in this scripture. God sends the word, using His poor weak servant. That word comes in mighty power. It brings man from *his* throne, strips him of his robe, of all self-righteousness—opens his eyes to see his vileness. He abhors himself in sackcloth and ashes. He judges himself according to that word. He fasts, that is, nothing can satisfy his soul, until Christ is known in His person and work. Everything fails: he now cries out mightily to the Lord. He is heard, and this leads to fruits of repentance in a holy life.

What a witness will this repentance at the eight words of Jonah be in the day of judgment! As we said, there was no hope of mercy held out. But they believed God, they repented, and now they count on God, they trust God. They say, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Thus it was the goodness of God that led them to repentance. And did God disappoint the trust of the vast multitude of Nineveh? No. "And God saw their

works, that they turned from their evil way ; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them ; and he did it not." And Jesus says, "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it ; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas ; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."

Jonas, an unwilling preacher, came from Palestine to Nineveh, and preached eight words, and scores of thousands believed God, and repented. The Son of God has come from heaven, and revealed the whole character of God in righteousness, yet love ; certain and everlasting wrath coming on all who believe not on Him, yet present repentance and forgiveness of sins preached in His name. It is not now, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Not a shadow of uncertainty remains. "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Jesus has been lifted up on the cross—He has died for our sins. God has raised Him from the dead for our justification. God is pledged in righteousness and love. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Yes, God is now fully revealed in Christ. With the scriptures in our hands we can come into His

presence, and hear all the words of Christ. We hear God speaking to us in the person of the Son. But do not forget God is now commanding all men to repent. “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” Oh, how gracious of God ; not merely announcing judgment, as in Jonah's sermon, but now the atoning work is done, God commands all men everywhere to repent.

It is thus the goodness of God leads to repentance. Oh, be not deceived, sin and self must be judged now in the presence of God in grace, or all must be brought out in judgment. Trust not in a false peace—a mere assent to the truth, without any exercise of soul as to sin, and any giving up the pleasures of a world which is hastening on to judgment. We fear many souls are thus deceived. A mere form of godliness, but denying the power. If such should be the case of any of our readers, may the word come to the king, may he come down from his throne, lay aside his robe, clothe himself in self-judgment, and cry mightily to God in prayer—may he proclaim a fast to his soul, and be turned to God from every idol. We need not say that this can only be now by faith in the testimony of God to the person and finished work of His beloved Son ; to whom be all praise now and evermore. Amen.

PARDON AND JUSTIFICATION.

PARDON and justification are not the same thing. Pardon is the favour and kindness of a person wronged passing over faults against himself, an act of prerogative goodness; so that kindness flows forth unimpeded by the wrong—though in this case it be by the blood of Christ. JUSTIFICATION is the holding not chargeable with guilt. The latter refers to righteous judgment; the former, to kindness. Where one is a sinner against God, they approach one another, and run together in fact, but are not the same, nor in the effect the same in the heart. *Justified*, I do not fear judgment; *pardoned*, my heart returns in comfort to Him who has pardoned me ; but by His blood we have both. It is another aspect, not another act. So, when we connect our risen position with justifying, it is not logically exact. The justifying is always holding discharged from accusation. The way in which we so stand is not simply holding us to be clear, but, by the resurrection of Christ putting us into a new position ; for, if He be risen, and God has acknowledged therein the satisfaction made in Christ's death, He has therein discharged or justified us. But that which justified us implies, therefore, more than pardon, an introduction into God's presence as Christ stands there. If Christ be not raised, we are yet in our sins ; but, if He

be, we are cleansed by a work which brings us into the glory of God in perfect acceptance. This is not properly justification, but it is the justification we have got, seeing how we have obtained the justification, for we are *justified* by being the righteousness of God in Him, and are warranted practically in taking what Christ is as the measure of our justification, because it is that which will be recognised in the day of judgment. “Herein is love made perfect with us, that we should have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world.” The day of judgment pronounces on us. We are as the Judge—clearly justified therefore. But the Lamb is the judge too; we appear before Him who bore our sins; so that their being put away, covered (in virtue of which work all is *pardoned*), is our *justification* too; for “we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”—*An Extract.*



A WORD ON SANCTIFICATION.

SANCTIFICATION is by God the Father as to its source. He who in Himself is set apart and separate from evil, is the source of our being set apart from evil to Himself. Thus it is by His blessed will that we are sanctified. (Jude i.; Heb. x. 10.) His will is the very spring of our new being. Christ’s work is the ground of our sancti-

fication ; it is through His one offering, that we are set apart to be God's priests, worshippers of Himself. (Heb. x. 10.) Christ's Person is the measure of our sanctification ; for He is made unto us sanctification. (1 Cor. i. 30.) He is the Holy Vessel in God's presence set apart from the world to Himself, and we are sanctified in Him. The Holy Ghost is the power of our sanctification in its application to the man here, so that the whole man (spirit, soul, and body) is practically set apart to God. Peter expresses it, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. i. 2.) Paul says to the Thessalonians, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly (or entirely to the end), and I pray God that your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. v. 23.)

Lastly, the word is the instrument of our sanctification in this latter aspect, according to our Lord's own words, "Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth !" (John xvii.) This last likewise has a purifying effect on the man ; leading him to self-judgment by the light, which the death, resurrection, and glory of Christ bring into him. The heart is purified by faith, the soul likewise, through obedience to the truth ; the man is morally changed ; besides a new life is imparted, a distinct life from and in connection with Christ

in glory, who is God's gift of eternal life to the believer. He is born of water and of the Spirit; not of water only, nor of the Spirit only, but by water and the Spirit, so that the same person, morally purified, and having new life imparted, lives to God.

This however does not mean that sin is eradicated or purified out of the man. No, my reader, it remains there in all its deformity, as every real Christian having the truth in him will own; but the man, spirit, soul, and body, is morally purified from it, and set apart to God, through the death of Christ morally applied, henceforth to live for His glory. I fear that many of us in combating with error, and finding how little the new man in Christ Jesus is known, have gone to the other extreme, and practically deny (not in word, perhaps), the being born of water, that is the moral purifying of the heart and soul from sin. Sin is confounded with the man, or made the root of his being, instead of realising that man is God's creature, and sin is a distinct thing introduced at the fall, and defiling and corrupting all his component parts, spirit, soul, and body, but from which it is God's will he should be purified and set apart to Himself.

I unhesitatingly deny that sin is the source of man's being. God is. *He* formed the spirit of man that is in him. Sin is transmitted from *Adam* to his descendants, has its seat in the heart, defiling the very spring of man's being, so that evil

thoughts, &c., come forth from thence. He is thus a ruined creature, spirit, soul, and body defiled, guilty for his sins, an enemy of God, and born in sin; but justified, reconciled, and delivered the moment he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. He is also without strength to deliver himself, even when purification and sanctification have begun in his soul, as the end of Romans vii. shews us. He would do good, but evil is present with him, he delights in the law of God after the inward man; with the mind, he serves the law of God. Thus the will, mind, and inner man are on the right side, but sin and the flesh on the other side are too strong. This brings out the cry, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? and he finds the answer in God, through Christ outside of himself.

Thus sanctification by the Spirit is the moral setting apart of the man to God from sin and the flesh, which still remains in him. Sin cannot be eradicated or purified, nor the flesh, but the man morally is purified as to his heart, mind, will, soul, and inner man, and set apart to God. The body, even though in its present condition unfit for heaven, is God's set apart vessel, as indwelt by His Spirit to be used in His service.

In this sense sanctification, and with it washing by the word, as to regeneration, come before justification and sprinkling by blood. (See 1 Cor. vi. 11; 1 Pet. i. 2.) The latter are only received on

the reception of the gospel. The ancient priests, under the law, as to the type, were first washed with water, then sprinkled with blood, and anointed with oil. So in Cornelius's case, the first Gentile convert to Christianity, we have all the fruits of the new birth manifested at the beginning of chapter x., but it was not till Peter had preached the gospel to him, and it was received by faith, that he got the remission of sins, and in consequence got the Holy Ghost. (See same chapter to the end.)

May the Lord bless these few thoughts to my reader, and use them to minister increased clearness in our way of putting forth the truth.

I would note that sin is always looked at as a distinct thing from the man, in Romans v., vi., vii. whether in his unconverted or new born state. The washing of the word of life flows to us out of Christ's death on the cross, as the blood also.

A. P. C.

WHY NOT WATCH?

"Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour." (Matt. xxv. 13.)

THE Lord assures us He is coming, and calls us to be waiting and watching. He has also of late years given us a clear and scriptural understanding about His coming. He has shewn us too the dis-

tinction between His “coming” and “the day; so that while “we see the day approaching,” we have not to wait for any particular events to be fulfilled, for Christ Himself to come. Thus the faithful among the Jews by-and-by will be looking for “the Sun of Righteousness to arise, with healing in his wings,” to introduce them to their long-foreseen day of blessing on the earth; we are taught now to look for “the Bright and Morning Star,” to take us away from the earth, and translate us to glory. This must precede the rising of the Sun, which ushers in the day. The coming of the Lord *for* us to meet Him in the air, is then plainly distinguished from His coming in manifested glory *with* us to the earth. (See Mal. iv. 2; Rev. i. 17; 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17; Rev. xxii. 16.) But, with all this scriptural knowledge, why are we not more truly waiting and watching for Him?

In Luke xii. our Lord solemnly refers to this, and shews what may be the *hindrances*, and what will be the *accompaniments*, to our really waiting for Him as wise and faithful servants. As to the former, we may notice—

1st. FEARS. If the heart be oppressed with the fear of man, or dread of circumstances, we shall of necessity be occupied with these things instead of the Lord. Hence our Lord said, “Fear not, little flock;” and again, “Fear not them which kill the body.” If the heart is thus dreading men and circumstances, unbelief is at work, some-

thing has come in between us and the Lord, and communion is interrupted. We are not, therefore, consciously in the circle of divine, unchanging, eternal love. Besides, "fear hath torment." It brings sadness, as well as leanness. Moreover, we are told, "the fear of man bringeth a snare." (Prov. xxix. 25.) The dwelling in the full consciousness of the Father's love, is the alone deliverance from fears. A verse in Psalm xxxiv. has been paraphrased. "Fear him ye saints, and then ye shall have nothing else to fear." This is most true. Our Lord also said to His disciples, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him, which, after he has killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea I say unto you, fear him." And, after assuring us that a sparrow is not forgotten before God ; and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered; our Lord graciously added, "Fear not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Vers. 4-8.) Surely, nothing could exceed the tenderness and care conveyed by such endearing words. The consciousness that the Father loves us as He loves His Son, and cares for us in numbering the hairs of our head, will enable us to rise so superior to men and circumstances, that the love of the world will not be in us, neither will the fear of man, or any fear of evil oppress us ; for "perfect love casteth out fear." We shall

heed the Saviour's words, "Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." We shall be happily occupied by faith with our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall find it pleasant to watch and wait for His coming.

2nd. CARES. He who has been our Sin-bearer is now our Care-bearer. But if instead of casting all our care upon Him who careth for us, we bear the burden ourselves, we soon get away from the Lord. In the parable of the Sower, Jesus referred to cares hindering the power of the truth. "The cares of this world . . . choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." (Mark iv. 19.) The heart may thus become occupied with cares instead of with the Lord ; and therefore not in a condition to be waiting and watching for His coming.

It is a mistake to suppose that it needs bad things, or trying things, to weigh heavily on our hearts as cares. Prosperity produces cares as well as poverty. On the one hand our Lord spoke of a rich and covetous man who said, "What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?" This was his anxiety ; the burden on his heart was, how large and commodious the new barns should be : a fruitful source of leanness and unhappiness of soul. We fear it is far from being uncommon in this day of loud profession. It is self, a man laying up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God ; and at a time, perhaps, when the Lord's tried and honoured servants are

groaning in secret before Him for necessary food and raiment. No marvel that our Lord said to such a man, "Thou fool."

On the other hand, the pinch of poverty is trying, and especially to such as have known "how to abound;" but our Father knows that, and He says, Do not be anxious. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body what ye shall put on." If it be a question of food, look at His care even for unclean creatures—"Consider the ravens." If it be a question of raiment, see how He clothes the grass of the field, which quickly springs up, and is soon cut down and cast into the oven, yea, "Consider the lilies." Do not then be like the nations of the earth, "for your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." (Ver. 30.)

The Lord's mind therefore is, that instead of these anxieties, we should be dwelling on our Father's perfect love to us in Christ, and seeking His glory and obedience to His will, as matters of the *first* and highest considerations: reckoning upon His care for the supply of food and raiment. If self be the motive, and not the glory of God; if doing our own will have the *first* place in our minds—if the Lord's authority, service, and the welfare of the members of His body claim our attention only in a secondary sense, it will not be surprising that disappointment and distress follow.

The man of plenty so acting may find he has been laying up his treasure in bags which fail, and the one in poverty will resort to the world's contrivances of getting out of his difficulties, and instead of proving the Father's care and faithfulness, bring many sorrows upon himself. May we all heed the Saviour's searching words, "seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you." (Ver. 31.)

3rd. THE TREASURE. What has been advanced leads to the heart-searching question as to where our treasure is? We know what it ought to be, but *where* is it? Is our treasure on earth, or in heaven? May we have grace to deal honestly with ourselves on this momentous question. We believe it to be the great question for the day; the all-important point for the heart-searching consideration of every child of God; for our Saviour said, "*Where* your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Ver. 34.) Happy those who can truly say—

“Jesus shall my treasure be,
Now and through eternity.”

Such are taken up with the Lord Himself. They know Him as the strength of their life and their portion for ever. They know Him not only as a relief for the conscience, but as a resource on all occasions; not only as a refuge, but as the fountain of all blessing. They live by the faith of

Him, they refer all to Him, and draw all they need from Him. Apart from Him, they see no beauty ; and do not wish to be where He is not. His interests are their interests ; His honour their honour ; His reproach their reproach ; His will their will. His glorious person ; His accomplished work, His various offices, His goings forth from everlasting, His moral excellences and perfections have so won their hearts, that they can truly say—

“ That with Thy beauty occupied,
We elsewhere none can see.”

In a word, such have “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.” Thus much for the hindrances to watching for our Lord’s return.

The *accompaniments* of waiting and watching are also brought before us in this chapter. No doubt He was then specially referring to the Jewish remnant, to whom His coming will be more in the suddenness of a thief, because it will be connected with judgment. But we are assured that we are “not in darkness, that that day should overtake us as a thief.” (1 Thess. v. 4.) Still, though the remnant is specially referred to here, our Lord’s reply to Peter’s question, “Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all ?” gives ample warrant for our applying the great principles to ourselves.

There are then at least two practical ways which

mark those who are truly waiting and watching for the Lord—girded loins, or service ; and brightly burning lights, or testimony.

The idea that “seeing the second coming,” as some call it, is all that scripture teaches is far beside the mark. And we have to fear lest this great and practical truth of scripture decline in us to mere knowledge of doctrine, however orthodox and important ; for we hold it to be impossible to be really waiting and watching for God’s Son from heaven, apart from practical ways of separation from the world, and devotedness to the Lord. The wise virgins had oil, and, with burning lamps, went forth to meet the Bridegroom. The hope of the early Christians was connected with serving the living and true God. The expectation our Lord gave to His disciples was, that He would come again and receive them unto Himself, that where He is, there they might be also, and He also said, “ Occupy till I come.” And so here our Lord’s words are, “ Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord.” (Vers. 35, 36.) Let us look for a moment at these two distinguishing marks.

1. *The girded loins* give us the idea that the person is ready for service; from which we learn that the Lord would not have us be merely talking of His coming, but that waiting and watching for Him should be connected with

devotedness. His household, His gospel, His sheep and lambs will be objects of our interest, concern, and care. Doing His will, going hither and thither to carry out His mind, or, like Mary sitting at His feet for necessary strength, wisdom, and grace, will occupy those who are really "as men that wait for their Lord." Elsewhere we read that the mark of the true and faithful servant is that he cares for the Lord's household, to give them meat in due season; concerning whom it is said, "Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, he shall make him ruler over all his goods." (Matt. xxiv. 45-47.) May we then be watching and waiting with girded loins !

2. *Lights burning*, or testimony for the Lord. All is darkness where there is no light ; but even if a small light is introduced, what a marvellous change is produced, and how many things are made manifest ! There is no mistaking a light in a dark place, unless people are blind. We are to shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. We are not merely to abstain from evil, but to manifest the mind of Christ—to be for Him down here, in the sweet consciousness that He is for us up there. Those around will thus know that we are for the Lord, and that we take sides with Him in the very presence of those who reject Him. This will entail self-judgment, self-denial, and the cutting off of much that would otherwise be

tolerated. The lamp must be trimmed, and fully supplied with oil in order to burn well; everything must be laid aside that stands in the way of its shining brightly. The crust must be removed from the wick, and all hindrances to the light shining must be taken away. Every weight must be dropped, every impediment to the service of Christ and obedience to His will put away, and the heart be drawing constantly from the grace of God in Christ, if we would be shining as lights in the world.

Let none imagine, therefore, that if oppressed with fears, burdened with cares, and indifferent to the Lord's service, they can be as men that wait for their Lord. Those only who know that perfect love casteth out fear, and are careful for nothing, because they roll every burden upon Him who cares for them: those who rejoice in Christ Jesus as the treasure of their hearts, and therefore make His interests to be of *first importance*; those who are girded and active in doing the Master's will, and in refusing everything that hinders true testimony for Him; such are as men that wait for their Lord: such lovingly look up to Him and say “Come, Lord Jesus.”

“FOR YET A LITTLE WHILE, AND HE THAT SHALL COME WILL COME, AND WILL NOT TARRY.”
(Heb. x. 37.)

.. CORRESPONDENCE.

7. "An Anxious Inquirer," Wincanton. If you compare Matthew xii. 31, 32, with Mark iii. 29, 30, you will clearly see that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, spoken of by our Lord, was the wickedness of the scribes in charging Him with casting out devils by Satanic power, instead of by the Holy Ghost—"Because they said, he hath an unclean spirit." We know that He was so pure and perfect as Man, that the Holy Ghost came down and abode upon Him, while the voice from the glory was heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Again, in Peter's memorable sermon at Cæsarea, he said that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."

8. "B.," Hunstanton. When Paul speaks of "a castaway," in 1 Corinthians ix. 27, he had no uncertainty as to his own personal and eternal safety; for he says immediately before, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air." But because he was born of God, and had received the Holy Ghost, he kept his body not for the unbridled lusts of the flesh, but brought it into subjection to God by His truth. Were all this wanting, would preaching to others save him? If, with all his preaching to others, there were the entire absence of vital and practical Christianity, what could save him? Would it not shew that he had not been born of God, and had not received the Spirit of God? It is an important point; for some, because they have preached to others, think they will be saved on that

account. Far be the thought ! For preacher and hearer there is no Saviour but Jesus the Son of God ; no title to glory for anyone but His precious blood. We are told that some so rely on their dōings and preachings, that when consciously shut out from the blessed, many will say to Jesus in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ? and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works ? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. vii. 22, 23.)

With regard to the second point in your letter, if you wait on the Lord only, and seek to do His will according to His word, as taught by the Holy Ghost, you will assuredly find clear and certain guidance.

9. "H. D.," Walham. We understand the hymn containing the verse—

"Joyful now the new creation
Rests in undisturb'd repose,
Blest in Jesu's full salvation,
Sorrow now nor thraldom knows"

to be a hymn of joyful anticipation of that eternal scene of undisturbed repose, when "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away." Yes, when "the first heaven and the first earth shall have passed away." The word "*now*" must be understood as applying to the eternal rest, in contrast with the present now, in which we are indeed passing through sorrow and conflict—harassed by the enemy, in a world of darkness, cruelty, sin, and death. Oh, how blessed, in every sense, the rest that remaineth to the people of God !

10. "M. W.," London. We cannot understand why there should be any difficulty in obtaining letters of commendation. If these were needed in apostolic times, how much more so now, when the last days are upon us! There should surely be no carelessness in doing the Lord's will, as revealed in scripture: neither can any right-minded Christian think it a trouble to do that blessed will. We should deprecate departure from Acts xviii. 27; Romans xvi. 1, 2; 2 Corinthians iii. 1, by the substitution of any other means. We need to watch against mere expediency. The Lord keep us close to His blessed word.

11. "H.," Detroit, Michigan, U.S. Your kind letter and paper, enclosed, have been received with thanks. May the Lord continue to bless His word to the saving of many souls, and delivering many of His saints from what is contrary to His own truth in the United States! We most heartily thank God for what He has done of late.

12. "T. R. R.," Chelsea. We should be careful not to lower the truth of scripture to a mere book of rules. No doubt God looks for exercise of soul before Him over His word, in dependence on the Holy Ghost, with the view of ascertaining His will, and of doing it in His way. For a Christian to assure his life seems to us not compatible with a life of faith and dependence on God; but it is often an unbelieving contrivance to be independent of God. Sometimes the office fails, and the assurers lose all they have invested. God never fails those who trust in Him. However, about this and similar matters, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

In Luke xvi. 1-12 we see a man of the world acting dishonestly, but wisely, and with reference

to possession for the future. It is on the *wisdom* of these sinful men which our Lord remarks, and admonishes us so wisely to use our substance now for His glory, as to have future reward.

13. "E. B.," Castres, (France). We see no reason for questioning the idea of certain angels having special work of guardianship assigned to them, as the words you quote, "*their angels*," and "*his angel*," in Matthew xviii. ; Acts xii. The ministry of angels holds an important place in scripture, and we hope, if the Lord will, to call attention to it at another time.

As regards the salvation of infants, do not such scriptures as Romans v. 14, Matthew xix. 14, and Deuteronomy i. 39, compared together in the presence of the God of all grace, satisfy the inquiring mind?

14. "B. S.," Burton. No doubt the marriage of the Lamb will take place before the Jewish remnant receive their Messiah, and the literal application of Luke xii. 36, 37 may be so understood ; but our Lord's reply to Peter's question of verse 41 gives authority for applying the moral principles of this chapter to ourselves, and they are of the utmost importance.

With regard to the bride, in Revelation xxi. 2, she is looked at in her eternal state ; but in the vision which follows from verse 9, she is seen in her millennial state. We must never forget that the language of Revelation is, for the most part, symbolical, and the different sections of this most blessed book passed before the apostle's eye as visions. Waiting on the Lord, to be taught by the Holy Ghost, is the true way of receiving scripture for profit.

THE SYRIAN LEPER.

“Wash and be clean.”—(2 Kings v. 13.)

NAAMAN was a mighty man of valour, high in repute with the king of Syria, honourable too, and distinguished as the captain of the king's host ; but “he was a leper.” This is a terrible addition. Looking, however, at leprosy as a type of sin, it may be truly added to the description of any, the most honourable, refined, mighty and prosperous among men in their natural state now —*but he is a sinner*. Whatever he may think of himself, such is his state before God.

What a dreadful thing sin is ! It formed no part of man's creation, for we are told that God made man upright. (Eccle. vii. 29.) Sin was introduced at the fall. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” (Rom. v. 12.) Man is therefore by nature a sinner. Every one might in truth say, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Ps. li. 5.) Our birth-condition being bad, all are necessarily sinners by practice. God says, “all have sinned,” and “there is not one righteous, no not one.” (Rom. iii. 10, 23.) Man's sins come from an evil heart. Again scripture affirms, “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.” This, leprosy remark-

ably illustrates. The disease is in the blood, and is of a deadly character. It is a constitutional malady, and from any exciting cause, breaks out readily to the surface. Moreover, like sin, it is incurable by human means ; it is loathsome, and easily spreads. A leper was pronounced to be "utterly unclean," and was commanded to go outside the camp, and with a covering upon his upper lip to cry, "Unclean ! unclean !"

With man sin is irremediable. He may cover up the leprous spots, and wash off some of its unclean accompaniments ; but he cannot cleanse a conscience from its guilt, or deliver any from its power. God alone can do that.

Naaman must have felt the loathsomeness and the danger of his state ; but God was gracious to him. A little Israelitish maid, his wife's attendant, was the instrument used to give him hope. Through her he heard that there was recovery to be had in the land of Israel. He heard, too, that it was effected by "the prophet that is in Samaria." This report was the first sound of glad tidings of a cure for leprosy which seems to have reached this distressed man ; and we can easily imagine how welcome such tidings must have been. Now mark the effects. He did not, as many do, treat the good news as if he heard it not ; no, it produced in him great concern. His desire for being cleansed was so urgent, that he seems to have lost no time, nor spared inquiry, to learn more about it. But,

like many true-hearted souls now, when desiring salvation from the wrath to come, he set about it in a wrong way. He looked to human aid and interest, instead of coming at once to the man of God. He took letters to the king of Israel from the king of Syria, saying he had sent Naaman to be healed of his leprosy. With this the king of Israel was very indignant. He knew that none but God could heal him. Therefore he "rent his clothes," and replied, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" (Ver. 7.) How many there are now, who when first awakened to a real sense of their guilt and danger as sinners in the sight of God, fly to men, some form of religion, ministers, priests, and ordinances, instead of coming at once, by faith, to the Lord Jesus Christ, who only can cleanse them from the leprosy of sin!

Afterward, however, Naaman determined to go to the man of God. Like a person of self-importance, he drove with his horses and his chariot to the door of the prophet's house, but only to be terribly disappointed not to see the prophet's face. The suffering leper had not yet learned the lesson that God's great and glorious ways are hid from the wise in their own eyes, but are revealed unto babes. At the door of Elisha's house, however, he heard the glad tidings, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." What words of comfort

for a leprous man ! How rich, how free, how wonderful the grace of God to sinners of the Gentiles ! But how does the great and honourable man treat these gracious words ? Does he hasten at once to Jordan ? Not so. He is not broken down enough yet to receive God's truth as a little child ; he is not yet content to be blessed and cleansed in God's way. Proud reasoning comes in to hinder and delay the blessing. Why, he thought, must I wash in Jordan ? Why not dip in one of our own beautiful rivers, if it be merely a question of "wash and be clean?" "Are not Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel ? May I not wash in them and be clean ? So he turned away in a great rage." (Ver. 12.) Such are we by nature. Our minds are at such enmity with God, that we prefer anything to simple subjection to God's word, and giving glory to Him. But this cannot be. Beautiful as the rivers of Damascus were, their waters cannot cleanse a leprous man, however many times he may dip in them. It is Jordan only. And why ? Because Jordan means the river of judgment. It speaks of that without which there could be no cleansing of the leprosy of sin. Unless sins had been judged, there could be no remission. It is blessedly true then that God laid upon Jesus His Son the iniquity of us all ; and that He bare our sins in His own body on the tree. He died for our sins. Sins therefore, were judged on the holy

Son of God on the cross, for He there “ suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Had God not judged sins on the cross, there could have been no cleansing, for “ without shedding of blood is no remission.” But this having been done, it is now due to Christ, and due to every sinner that takes shelter in His blood, and righteous on God’s part also, to cleanse such from all sin. “ He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” What infinite grace and wisdom, and yet all coming to us through righteousness!

Such we judge to be the typical explanation why the waters of Jordan only could cleanse the leper. And it is of all importance to see that sins have been dealt with judicially on the cross—that Jesus was there made sin for us, who believe, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him; that He was there “ wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities,” and that “ with his stripes we are healed.”

The leper’s anger was not a little kindled at this simple way of cleansing, apart from all priestly interference or religious ordinances. He was evidently looking forward to an imposing ceremonial, instead of which he had the words only—“ Go and wash in Jordan seven times.” What a difficulty to man’s proud and unbelieving heart does the very simplicity of the gospel present! Yet a lowly mind, with a divinely-wrought faith, wants nothing

more than the word of God on which to repose implicitly. Naaman said, "Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper . . . so he turned and went away in a great rage." (Vers. 11, 12.)

But with all these workings of pride, ignorance, and unbelief, Naaman is a leper still, needy and helpless as ever. His servants try to assuage his anger. They reason with him on the simplicity of the remedy, they remind him that it is only "Wash and be clean." He too is conscious of the greatness of his danger and the urgency of his need, as also of the probability of never having the opportunity again within his reach. It was a deeply serious moment! The only remedy is now so pressed upon his soul that he lays aside all reasoning, and in simple faith acts on the saying of the man of God. We read, "Then," yes then, and not till then; but "Then," (while the words, "Wash and be clean," were engaging his mind) "went he down, and dipped himself in Jordan seven times, according to the saying of the man of God." (Ver. 14.) A beautiful example of faith, for he acted simply on the authority of the word. He did "according to the saying of the man of God." And now mark the result. The blessing which followed was exactly what Jehovah's prophet had said, for he was not only cleansed, but his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child.

Still looking at the instruction typically, we may observe, first, having taken his place as a loathsome, helpless leper, and bowed himself seven times in the river of judgment (thus owning the just claims of death and judgment over him) he was *cleansed*. So those now who own the righteous judgment of God for sin in the death of His Son upon the tree, and bow to Him, are cleansed from all sin. Such are assured that their sins have been already judged, that God has forgiven them, and will not remember their sins any more. “To him [Christ] give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” (Acts x. 43.) Perfect cleansing of sins by the blood of Jesus.

Secondly. The leprous man had not only cleansing, but “his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child.” This reminds us of the new birth; for every one who believes on the Son of God hath everlasting life; he is born of water (the word) and of the Spirit. He is a new-born babe. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” Thus the burdened, sin-stricken soul that has fled to Jesus for salvation, has not only a purged conscience by the blood of Jesus, but he has also a new life in Christ, a new nature, which under the teaching of the Holy Ghost is capable of knowing God, entering into the deep things of God, and of enjoying His presence for ever. What a marvellous change for this loathsome

leper ! What a deliverance and recovery ! Yet all through the sovereignty of divine grace and on the principle of faith. We say sovereign grace, for our Lord informs us, that "there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." (Luke iv. 27.)

But further ; we may notice the practical effects of this grace and power of God on this cleansed one. First, he returned to the man of God. He sought his company. This was a new order of things entirely. "He returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and stood before him." (Ver. 15.) In this, do we not see the principle of love manifested to God's people ? And does not true faith always work by love ? Can anyone really believe on the Lord Jesus to the saving of his soul, and not love Him ? Impossible. Do we not love Him because He *first* loved us ? And does not He who loves Him that begat, love also those who are begotten of Him ? Hence we find a sentence in scripture, which has been a comfort to thousands, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Where there is not love to the Lord Jesus and to those whom "He is not ashamed to call his brethren," there is no life—"he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." (1 John iii. 14.) "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—accursed when the

Lord cometh. (1 Cor. xvi. 22.) In Naaman's case we find that, before all his servants he did not hesitate openly to confess his attachment to the man of God.

Secondly. He gave glory to the God of Israel. This faith always does. We are told that Abraham was "strong in faith, giving glory to God?" The confession of this recovered leper was, "Now I know there is no God in all the earth but in Israel." And so now the believer, by whatever instrumentality he has been brought to Jesus as His Saviour, gives all the praise and glory to God.

Thirdly. Naaman now wishes to use his means for the benefit of God's people. He urges Elisha to take a blessing, but the prophet properly refused. Under other circumstances, he gladly accepted the kind hospitality of the Shunamite for himself and his servant; but in this case, he doubtless saw it would appear that the servant would by accepting the present, be according something meritorious to himself, instead of giving all the glory to God.

And now, dear reader, we affectionately inquire, What say you to these things? Are you conscious of being a sinner in the sight of God, both by nature and practice, and that God must judge sin? Do you tremble at the thought of death and judgment being immediately before you? Does it not sometimes occur to your mind that you must either now be cleansed from sin, or for ever suffer in your sins? Oh! turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?

Did not Jesus the Son of God die for sinners? Does not His blood cleanse from all sin? Then why go to the lake of fire for ever? Why not "Wash and be clean?" Why not *now*? for the Son of God still delights to save sinners. He calls, He beseeches. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" Can you refuse such love? Can you try to conceal your leprous spots, and appear clean before men, when, in the sight of God you are "Utterly unclean?" Hearken then to the Saviour's solemn words, If ye "die in your sins, whither I go, ye cannot come!" Think then, dear reader, of the awful possibility of your dying in your sins. Bow at once to the sinner-loving Saviour. Fall now, as a leprous sinner, into His open arms. Often have you heard the message of His wondrous grace, and refused to come, but *now*, yes *NOW*, may the language of your inmost soul be, while looking straight to Him in faith—

"Myself into Thine arms I cast,
Lord save this sinful one *at last.*"

And save He will, for to-day is the day of salvation. He will receive you, welcome you, and never cast you out. He will wash you in His blood, cleanse away all your guilt, and forgive all your sins. He will give you His Holy Spirit, and then you will manifest that you love Him because He first loved you. You will love the brethren. You will give to Jesus the Lord all the praise and glory of your

eternal salvation, and the desire of your soul will be henceforth to live, not unto yourself, but to Him who died and rose again for you.

This exquisite chapter, however, does not close without recording a most solemn warning. Gehazi was the trusted servant of "the man of God." He was accustomed to see his master's ways of faith, and of obedience to the will of God. He had tarried with him at the Shunamite's house, and accompanied him in the miracle of raising her dead son to life. He had also witnessed the mighty power and goodness of God in cleansing the leprous captain according to Elisha's testimony, and had been present when he rightly declined all reward, because the glory was alone due to Jehovah. But, with all this, Gehazi's heart was not right with God. In the blindness of an evil nature, he knew nothing better than the present possession of wealth. Money he would have, though it might only be obtained by deceit and lying. Gehazi loved money, and seeing now the recovered leper in the freshness of first love and liberality, he seized a fitting moment to run after him. By lying he succeeded in obtaining two talents of silver and two changes of garments, and then returned to his master with his accustomed demeanour, as if nothing had happened. He little thought that the eye of God was upon him, and that the power of God was with Elisha. When interrogated, therefore, Gehazi tries lying again. But he is made

manifest. God would not have such wickedness hid. He was convicted, and sentenced with the plague of leprosy upon himself and upon his seed for ever. After this, Gehazi is only known as amusing the king, by telling him "all the great things that Elisha had done." Such is man. (2 Kings v. 22-27 ; viii. 4.)

Little had Gehazi profited by all his advantages. The same is solemnly true with many now. But the scripture must be fulfilled, that "a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit," "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." With all the restraint of godly influence, and all the advantages of Bible knowledge, man is still at enmity against God, a lover of the pleasures of sin more than of God. The leprosy of sin is in him, and if not cleansed by the blood of Jesus, will cleave unto him for ever. In his sins during life, in his sins at death, in his sins at the judgment of the "great white throne," in his sins in the lake of fire for ever—shut out for ever from the light, and joy, and glory of God and of the Lamb!

Dear reader, which of these two men are you like at this moment? Have you, like Naaman, tasted the joy and blessing of having been perfectly cleansed from the leprosy of sin by the blood of Jesus? Or, is your heart set on money, and seeking to satisfy itself by the accumulation of wealth, or with any other earthly object?

PLAIN PAPERS ON THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

WHAT IT IS TO HIM.

"He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." (Isa. liii. 11.)

We have dwelt a little on what the coming of Christ will be to us who believe ; and what it will be to a rejecting world when He comes in judgment. We will now look a little at what it will be to Him. He has been bruised for us, yes "bruised for our iniquities." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Yes, His soul has been made an offering for sin. He bare the sins of many. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." "Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it : that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. v. 25-27.) And all this, not only the love of Christ, precious as that is, but "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will" (the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ) "according to his good pleasure which he

purposed in himself." We can thus hear the Son in the counsels of eternity saying, "Lo I come to do thy will." Thus Jesus saith to the Jews, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

Now from these most comforting scriptures, do we not see how deeply interested the Lord Jesus Christ must be in that blessed event, when the first part of the eternal purpose of God the Father shall be accomplished ? the presentation of the church glorious, without spot or wrinkle.

In order, however, to enter into this joy of the Lord, the reader must be quite sure that he has come to Christ, as we see here, because given to Him of the Father. If so, He must, and will, take good care that you shall in no wise be cast out. Does He not say so ? and is not that enough ? Is it possible after the cross, for either His love to cease, or for Him to fail to do the Father's will ? And that will is that you should not be lost, but that He should raise you up at the last day. Of that resurrection we will speak shortly. How gracious of the Lord to tell us all this, that the foundation of the blessed hope might be so sure ! Do you think Christ has any uncertainty about a

single soul given unto Him, whose sins He bare in His own body on the cross? Whether we think of those who have fallen asleep in Him, or those who are now alive on earth in the midst of this scene of temptation and conflict, is He afraid that He will fail to raise all in the glory given to Him? Are you a believer? Then, if you could be lost, of course He would fail to do the Father's will. Is not this impossible? Do you say, My sins come to my remembrance, and I almost sink in despair? Our sins; was He not nailed to the cross to bear them? Oh, see that holy, sinless One nailed there; and there doing the will of God in bearing our sins. Is not our Sin-bearer now crowned with glory? Yes, that same Jesus who was bruised for our iniquities, delivered for our offences, is now at the right hand of the majesty on high, having purged our sins; God having raised Him from the dead for our justification. He did not fail in that vast undertaking. He could say, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." There can be no question of this, for God has raised Him from the dead and received Him to glory. Then to believers there can be no uncertainty. Believing God, that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification, we are thus accounted righteous before God. Never can there be a question of this in the heart of Christ. Well does He

know that we are accepted in Him, One with Himself.

What joy this must be to the heart of Christ, knowing the righteousness of His God and Father in justifying us from all things, through His own divinely perfect work ! And not only this, blessed as it is, but " He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." Though we are justified from all things, accounted righteous, even as He is righteous, yet for the present we have to mourn over and deplore a sinful nature, yea, to abhor ourselves often too in bitter confession. Flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ; conflict too with wicked spirits in the heavenlies. And with all, in a world of tribulation, ever proving His tender care and intercession, and never failing to restore our souls.

Now pause, and think of the intense interest He has in that wondrous event so near at hand, when He shall come to receive us to Himself, and when all the present sorrow and conflict shall for ever cease. How this thought sustained His heart, even beneath the very shadow of the cross ! Let us hear how He speaks of it to us, and how He speaks to the Father. All was divinely certain to Him. He would have us share the same certainty. He says, " Let not your heart be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And

if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 1-3.) Yes, fellow believer, there is no doubt about it, He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. Did He die for your sins on the cross ? Then He will come and receive you unto Himself, and shall be satisfied. Oh, if one whose sins He bore on the cross could be lost, would He be satisfied ? Never, never, never. He was just about to enter that scene of travail of soul for us. Shortly He entered Gethsemane. Oh, see Him sweating, as it were, great drops of blood ! But if the prospect was so terrible, what was the deep untold reality on the cross ? He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. Though we are left in this world a little while, He would have us enjoy this blessed certainty with Himself. He could not be satisfied unless all the Father gave to Him were brought to glory.

Do you hear Him thus speaking to you ? " I will come again and receive you unto myself : that where I am, there ye may be also." You do not think He can break His promise ? No, He must see you there, fruit of the travail of His soul. " It is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing." Sweet resting-place of the heart that knows Him; Jesus' love fulfilling the Father's will in coming Himself, to receive us, fruit of the travail of His soul.

Now let us hear the breathing of His love to the Father. (John xvii.) Is it possible for words to express deeper longings of heart for those whom the Father hath given to Him? "I pray for them ; I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me ; for they are thine." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one as we are one." "Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory." What must that coming moment then be, when these longings of the heart of Christ shall be fulfilled : when He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied ? Waiting now in patience until the last soul given to Him of the Father passes from death unto life ; yet oh, the joy to Him when He comes as it is written, to receive us to meet Him in the air.

Ah ! this was the joy that was set before Him, as He crossed the brook Cedron, as He went into dark Gethsemane, and on to the cross. Be assured He will not fail to receive you at His coming. There is no uncertainty as to this, for "We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is."

Did you ever notice what a change will take place in heaven when the desire of the Lord's heart is thus granted, and He sees the travail of His soul so far

answered, when we are caught up to be for ever with Him? When the redeemed take their seats, clothed in white raiment, and crowned with gold, as seen under the figure of the four and twenty elders; then behold the Lamb as it had been slain takes His place in the midst of the throne. (Rev. iv., v.) The angelic myriads give place to the redeemed to occupy the inner circle. Yes, the thousands of thousands stand round about the throne and the crowned elders. What a change this is in heaven! Oh, the surpassingness of this grace! Think of this redeemed multitude of thieves, harlots, drunkards, and sinners of deepest dye, washed in the blood of the Lamb, clothed and crowned. Is not this the first time we hear of *singing* in heaven? Oh, to join that mighty roll of swelling song, that new song of further redemption-glories still to come. And hark! the thousands of thousands of angels around, saying with a loud noise, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. (Rev. v. 12.) And will He see you there? And will He be satisfied then, but not till then, for the travail His soul endured for you? Now, what a scene this will be for that same Jesus, who bare our sins amid the darkness and the forsaking of God, in judgment on our iniquities on the cross! But oh, how much to follow; and this is the burthen of the new song. Yes, He is worthy of the sealed

number of Israel ; the number also that no man can number of the vast multitude that shall be saved through millennial days ; vast numbers to be saved and washed in the blood of the Lamb after the church has been completed, and for ever with the Lord. And all those, too, who shall be slain for the testimony of Jesus during the times of tribulation from the taking of the church to His coming in judgment to reign. (Rev. vi.-xix.) Not one of these shall be lost ; "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." Nothing can prevent this blessed event taking place. Even from those scenes of unparalleled wickedness, He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.

And now a word as to the great millennial exhibition, when the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ shall shew His workmanship. "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," "and he shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone, most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." This reminds us of a visit to a large gold, and silver, and precious stone establishment on the Continent. The workshops were similar to those where common metals are worked ; the melting in the furnace, the rolling, the stamping, and

all the various branches. Though these precious metals and stones were of great value, yet they appeared to get rough handling in some parts of the operations. One thing was however striking, the great care, that, of all committed to the workmen, nothing should be lost. And you would not have thought that the value the proprietor set upon one little stone was three hundred pounds. Well, after a time came the exhibition, when every article in our friend's case was pronounced a perfect gem. You would not have thought if you had seen some of these, as they had been dipped in aquafortis, and other operations which we need not describe, what a pleasure it would be at last to the owner to see them in all their polish and perfection !

What will it be when our blessed Lord shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied ! We might look at some of His precious stones now. Few think of the value He sets on that dear soul toiling there at her washing, that one in the cellar, another in the attic, that one passing through sore temptation. And oh, what care, that of all the Father had given to Him, nothing should be lost ! Oh, blessed Lord, haste the day of thy great exhibition, when every redeemed saint shall be a perfect gem to thy eternal praise ! Let also the new heaven and the new earth appear, then shalt Thou see of the travail of Thy soul, and shall be satisfied. Even so Lord Jesus.—Amen.



THE SCRIPTURES.

No. 1.

By "the scriptures," we understand sacred writings. They are a most gracious gift. That they should ever have been recorded is very marvellous; but that they should have been preserved for us, amidst all the superstition and infidelity of the dark ages, is a standing witness of the goodness and power of God! We can thus, at this remote period, with the volume of inspiration before us, and the teaching of the Holy Ghost within us, receive the doctrines of the apostles in all their primitive purity, through their Epistles; we can be in company with the Son of God, and catch the inimitable utterances which fell from His gracious lips, in all their fervour and freshness; we are also enabled to enter into the divine ways as revealed in past ages, and receive instruction as it were from the mouth of God. So wonderful is the reality of possessing the infallible word of the living God.

Blessed be God, He hath spoken, and inspired His chosen servants to write the revelation of His own mind, so that we may read it again and again. In this sacred service He has been pleased to employ a variety of instruments, and at different times, extending over a period of perhaps seventeen or eighteen hundred years. Persons too in very different positions in this life were called, and

qualified, thus to set before us the mind of God. Sometimes learned men, and, at other times, ignorant and unlearned. On some occasions, kings were used in this blessed service, and at other times a herdman, or a fisherman. In many parts, by different instruments, at various times, and in many ways, God has graciously revealed His mind in writing, though always by the same Spirit, and all most manifestly setting forth one harmonious whole. However diversified and infinite its depth and range, yet all the parts so fit in with each other, that we could not be without any portion of the inspired writings without serious loss. The "words" too have been given, not according to those taught by human wisdom, but in those which the Holy Ghost teacheth. (1 Cor. ii. 13.) It is comforting to note that all is given for our profit and blessing. "All [or every] scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect [complete], throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.)

Moses was commanded of God to *write* (Ex. xxxiv. 27 ; Deut. xxvii. 3), and we are told that "Moses *wrote* all the words of Jehovah." Jesus said, "Moses wrote of me." Again, we read that Moses *wrote* this song according to the commandment of Jehovah, and taught it the children of Israel, and that "he *wrote* their goings out accord-

ing to their journeyings by the commandment of Jehovah." (See Deut. xxxi. 19-22 ; Num. xxxiii. 1.) Again, after the smiting of the rock on Horeb in order that the people might have water to drink, "The Lord said unto Moses, *Write* this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua." (Ex. xvii. 13.)

Moreover, it is clear that Moses was conscious that the word he gave to Israel had divine authority. He said, "It shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto *the voice of the Lord thy God*, to observe and to do *all the commandments which I command thee this day*, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth." His writings, therefore, are called "the book of this law," and "the covenant," and "the statutes which are *written* in this book of the law." "And Moses *wrote* this law, and delivered it unto the priests." (Deut. xviii. 1, 61 ; xxix. 21 ; xxx. 10 ; xxxi. 9.) These were some of the beginnings of holy scripture.

Joshua, who was Moses' successor, was solemnly charged by Jehovah to observe and do according to all the law which Moses commanded. It was also said, "This *book of the law* shall not depart out of thy mouth ; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to *all that is written therein* ; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." (Josh. i. 6-8.)

CORRESPONDENCE.

15. REQUEST FOR PRAYER.—“S. E. B.” writes, “As many of the Lord’s own have friends, near and dear by the ties of nature (but, should the Lord come at once, would be left behind) it is laid on my heart to ask for special, earnest prayer for such, through ‘Things New and Old.’ What mighty showers of blessing we should receive in our families, and among our friends, if the united cry of faith ascended as from one man!”

We gladly insert this request for prayer, though it is not exactly in our usual course of things; because we are assured of the need of the Lord’s people cultivating more earnest, persevering and believing prayer. When there is a full tide of prayer going up from our closets, with self-judgment and thanksgiving, then there will doubtless be more desire manifested for unitedly calling upon God.

16. H., Salisbury. Your letter duly received; we have forwarded it to the Publisher.

17. Wirksworth. Thanks for your kind letter. We rejoice to hear of the Lord’s gracious blessing to souls. May “the word of the Lord have free course and be glorified” in bringing many to God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. The paper your friend forwarded, though very interesting, is not suitable for this Magazine.

18. “Enquirer,” Okeford. In Galatians ii. 16, the apostle is treating of our justification in the sight of God, and shews that it is not by works of the law, but on the principle of faith, Christ being the object of faith. “We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of

Christ, and not by the works of the law ; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

In verse 20 of the same chapter he is teaching about christian life—the practical, every-day life of one who is justified, that it derives all its resources from Another, because without Him, even those who are born of God, can do nothing. Hence says the apostle, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

By "faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" in 1 Timothy i. 14, we understand believing on the Lord Jesus unto salvation, which, when real, always works by love. Hence, "faith in Christ Jesus and love to all the saints," are the two cardinal points of true Christianity. But when "faith" is spoken of in Romans iii. 22, the subject being "the righteousness of God," we are instructed that we are accounted righteous in God's sight on the principle of faith, and entirely apart from law. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets ; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." (Rom. iii. 21, 22.) The importance of a clear, scriptural apprehension of the doctrine of "the righteousness of God," in these days of error and superstition, can scarcely be overestimated.

19. "W.," Stockton-on-Tees. If in death the psalmist would fear no evil, and to him it would be but a shadow—"the valley of the shadow of death"—how much more boldly should the Christian, who has everlasting life, and is also united to Christ in glory by the Holy Ghost say, "I will fear no evil?" Delivered by the blood of Jesus, now

risen and ascended, from the sting of death, and the terror of death, he will surely prove the reality of the Saviour's words, "If a man keep my sayings he shall never taste of death." (John viii. 52.) But the Christian may not die, or fall asleep in Jesus, "we shall not all sleep;" for the Lord Himself shall come, and when He does, the living saints will be changed in a moment, and, with the raised saints who have died in Christ, be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. (1 Thess. iv. 16-18.)

With regard to being "born of water," it is well to observe that water is repeatedly mentioned in scripture as referring to the word, such as "the washing of water by the word" (Eph. v. 35), and "now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" in John xv. 3. Besides, when James writes on our being born again, he says "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." (James i. 18.) Peter also is conclusive on the subject, saying, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. i. 23.)

20. "S.," Sandgate. Your kind letter and inclosure received. We do not find in scripture the doctrine of the righteousness of Christ as often held. We read of "the righteousness of God," and that Christ is "of God made unto us righteousness," and again, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The idea that Christ by obeying and fulfilling the law wrought out a righteousness for us, is very contrary to the teaching of holy scripture. Our being accounted righteous, or "the righteousness of God" upon us who believe, is apart from law, and wholly of divine grace. It

is not a certain quantity of righteousness put to our account, but a state in which we are righteously accounted by God, in virtue of the God-glorifying work of Jesus about our sins. Hence it is always “the righteousness of God.” “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Cor. v.)

21. Kingston-on-Thames. Your kind communication has duly reached us. May we be more watchful for His “still small voice!”

22. Port Glasgow. The resurrection for the Great White Throne judgment, will not consist of a mixture of saved and lost, or of just and unjust. Scripture calls them “dead”—“I saw *the dead* small and great, stand before God.” (Rev. xx. 12.) This resurrection is called by our Lord “the resurrection of damnation,” or judgment, in contradistinction to the “resurrection of life,” or “the resurrection of the just.”

We are further told that all that appear before the Great White Throne will be judged “every man according to his works;” and who could be saved if judged according to his works? There is no account, therefore, of any being saved who are judged at the Great White Throne. Those who are taken to glory at the coming of our Lord, will be raised from among the dead a thousand years before the Great White Throne judgment. (See Rev. xx. 5; 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.)

“The last day” in John vi. 40-44, is not the last day that will be on earth, because, as we have just seen, the Lord will reign over this earth for a thousand years after they are raised; it will be therefore the last day to such, because they leave days and time for a blessed and never ending eternity.

G I D E O N :

OR,

“JEHOVAH-SHALOM”—“THE LORD SEND PEACE.”

No. I.

SURELY there is a word from the Lord, at this time, to us in the history of Gideon. (*Judges vi., vii., viii.*)

Israel at that time, through failure and departure from God, was in a similar condition to the state of Christendom now. Yet God heard the cry of His people. “And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage,” &c. They had grievously departed from God, but He ever acts towards His people on the sure basis of redemption. Let us well remember this, both in His dealings with Gideon, and with ourselves.

If some timid, doubting child of God should read this paper, let him remember that God his Father would speak to him on the ground of redemption; yes, on the sole ground of that one work which has been accomplished on Calvary’s cross. The enemy was in terrible power. When the angel of the Lord appeared unto Gideon, he was found threshing wheat behind the wine-press,

to hide it from the Midianites. There was one peculiarity, however, about this young man, one of great value in the judgment of the Lord. It was this, as we shall soon see—he was nobody in his own eyes. In after times, and having fuller light, this remains equally true. “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.” (1 Cor. i. 26.) “And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.” (Judges vi. 12.) Was not the word of the Lord enough, “The Lord is with thee?” Ought we not also to think it enough for every believer in this day, come what will, since our blessed Lord says, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them?” Unbelief hesitates and reasons. “Gideon said unto him, Oh, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.”

It is beautiful to see how he identifies himself with the whole nation. Thus will faith now re-

cognise the whole church of God. The Midianites were outside enemies. They came in multitudes to devour the land. "They came as grasshoppers for multitudes." Is it not so now? Is not the world and worldliness, Satan's world, eating up, and eating out, the spirituality of the church? Look where you will, there they are, like grasshoppers. The question is, how is this vast army of worldlings and worldliness to be met? So do they swarm in the professing church, and such is the power of Amalek in fashion, that many a Christian scarcely dares to be seen reading the word of God, but, like Gideon, creeps into a corner to thrash his wheat.

It is well to mark the way of our God at such a time. He does not take up the high priest, or one of the four-and-twenty, or some mighty captain of the host. Neither does He take up one from the college of the prophets. No, in divine, sovereign grace, God takes up this exercised son of an Abiezrite sunk in idolatry. Gideon was an exercised soul. He remembered "his miracles which our fathers told us of." He compared the days of a Moses, and a Joshua, with the sad condition of Israel, then in the hands of the enemy. And he said, "Why then has all this befallen us?" Has our reader ever been thus exercised? Have you ever compared the condition of the church, as God first formed it by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, as seen in the second and fourth chapters

of Acts, with the sad worldliness in which it is now sunk? An enemy hath done this. Have you ever in an exercised heart said, "Why then has all this befallen us?"

Let us notice a sovereign act. "And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" This is close, searching, personal work with the Lord Himself. There be many who say they are authorised servants of the Lord, who have never known this dealing of the Lord. But Jesus says to others, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." This was the kind of ordination Gideon had. Thus, blessed Lord, again appoint thy servants! Wonderful words—"Have not I sent thee?" And will this true call and ordination puff up the heart with pride? Let us hear the young man speak. "And he said unto him, Oh, my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." A true mark of one of God's chosen instruments. Another still more honoured servant could say, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." "And he said unto him (Gideon), Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

One would have thought Gideon would have taken the bare word of the Lord—"Surely I will be with thee." Are we not equally slow to accept the truth of the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost with the church, and to act upon it? And is it not quite true, before there can be real service, there must be divine certainty as to the grace of God?

Does God our Father thus speak to us? "And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me." It is well to look to the foundations. There must remain no "if," there must be no uncertainty, as to our standing in the free favour of God. Surely it is only in that free favour that we can bear to hear the voice of the Lord. How graciously the Lord waited upon Gideon; and so He does upon us. Yes, He said, I will tarry. So Gideon made ready his kid of the goats, and his unleavened cakes, and presented his offering. "And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so."

There on that rock look at God's sign to Gideon. You see that kid, and those unleavened cakes. Now turn from that to this, look back to Calvary's cross; you see that Lamb of God, the unleavened, holy, holy One: the sign of God, the token, the revelation of the righteousness and love of God.

He must needs suffer ; He must die for our sins according to the scriptures. "And the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes ; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight." Could there be any doubt now ? Surely this was the power of God. Yea, God accepting by fire the offering. A little time before there was on that rock the kid and the cakes. But they are not there, they are gone. Now let us look at Calvary. On that cross there was our Sin-bearer; the unleavened, the holy One, bearing our sins. Oh, that awful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" Look again ; is He there now ? Is He still bearing our sins ? Come into this garden—look into that sepulchre. Is He there ? Surely every victim consumed by fire pointed to this one sacrifice. He has endured the judgment due to our sins; but where is He ? Has not God, who accepted Gideon's offering, accepted that once bleeding Sin-bearer nailed to the cross ? No longer bearing our sins, but having purged them ; now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

This was a solemn moment for Gideon. Now he knows himself in the presence of God. "Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God ! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." Have you

been thus face to face with God? You must be, either now, or when it will be for ever too late to know His grace. Now what was the first word the Lord spake to Gideon to soothe, yea, to banish his fears after this figure of the death and resurrection of Christ? "Peace *be* unto thee." The very first words that Jesus spake to His disciples after He rose from the dead. Yes, "Jesus stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side." "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (John xx. 19.) The Lord said to Gideon, "Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." He said in resurrection to His disciples, yea, He says to us, "Peace unto you." "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself." (Luke xxiv. 36-39.)

Was it, then, more certain to Gideon that the fire of God had risen out of that rock, and consumed his offering, than it is to us that God hath raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead ; who was "delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification?" And have we not the testimony of the word of God, that as Abraham was accounted righteous on the principle of faith, so we, believing God, are accounted righteous before Him? "Therefore, being justified by faith, we HAVE

PEACE with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”^{*}
(Rom. iv., v.)

Now the effect of believing the sure testimony of the word of God is worship. The only altar that Gideon had known, before this moment that God spake peace to his soul, was the shameful altar of Baal.

Dear reader, you may not have known it, but the only worship you can have known, before God speaks peace to your soul, is the worship of Babylon : the church and world confusion around.

“ Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-Shalom.” You will see the meaning of this word is translated in the margin of your Bibles, “the LORD send peace.” His heart bowed in grateful worship and thanksgiving ; but linked with his people the whole Israel of God in their sad condition. The moment he tastes the joy of peace with God in his own soul, he says, “ Jehovah send peace,” yea, this is the name of his altar, this the character of his worship. Is it ours ? Thousands of the children of God around are like Israel then. Linked with the world ; its politics, its worship, its pursuits, its pleasures. Oh, is the cry of our hearts, Jehovah-Shalom ? Lord, send peace ! Lord, send peace ! Surely it should be so, for Jesus said, “ Peace unto you : as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” Does not this raise in our hearts the cry, “ Even so, Jehovah-Shalom. The Lord send

peace?" Did not the Father send Him to make peace by the blood of His cross? And has He not made peace by the blood of His cross, "and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh?" (Col. i. 20; Eph. ii. 14-17.) Let us, then, not only worship because He is our peace, but in our hearts ever cry, Jehovah-Shalom. How truly wonderful! As He sent His beloved Son to make peace, and to proclaim it; so He now sends us, as His messengers of peace to all around—yea, to the whole church of God. For Gideon's commission was for all Israel.

Well, if there is to be an onslaught on this vast system of worldliness in which the church is sunk, where would the Lord have us begin? Let us see where Gideon was to begin? AT HOME. "And it came to pass the same night that the Lord said unto him." Yes, there was peace to him and worship, and the cry of peace to flow out to others; but that very night the Lord spake to him. We are always without the word of the Lord if our first thought is to *correct* others. Begin at home. "Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it." And not only so, but the altar to Jehovah must be built on the rock, in the ordered place. And there must be worship there, and offer a burnt sacrifice. Yes, if you have been

turned to God, it must be unsparing destruction of all idolatry. Tumble down the altar of Baal, every idol which the heart, which nature, which thy father hath. Christ is all—on that rock the altar of worship must be permanently built. There may be timidity—there was with Gideon, he did it in the night. But it must be done : down, down with the altar of Baal at home. All this the Lord said unto him. What does the Lord say to us? Does He say we are not of the world, even as He is not of the world? Then down with the altar ; come out from among them, and be ye separate. Above all things let the true altar be built ; that is, let the one sacrifice of Christ have its permanent place. Here we can truly worship, sanctified by the will of God, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once. “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. x.) Yes, the altar must be built on the rock. Very wonderfully did God own the faithfulness of Gideon in thus beginning at home.



THE LORD'S WORK IN RUSSIA.

A DEEPLY interesting letter having come into our hands, giving an account of the Lord's gracious work at this time in Russia, we give the following touching extract, which is another example of the wonderful ways of God.

"Major P. went with one of his friends to a distant village, to preach the gospel. Having got about half way, suddenly one of the horses became lame, and it was impossible to continue the journey. They were expected at a certain hour, but were helpless. At this moment a countryman came out of the woods which were by the way, and offered to provide a carriage, and be himself the driver. Major P. willingly accepted the offer; yet the carriage had to be got from a farm in the neighbourhood. They had scarcely stepped in, when the driver, an aged man [seventy years], turned to Major P., and told him that he had tried to find him for more than three years, but that he never could succeed, because he had arrived too late, where Major P. had a meeting. Several times he had also gone to a distant village, in the expectation of finding him, but each time he was disappointed, the meeting being in another place. The poor man was almost discouraged, when God Himself ruled circumstances, so that he could hear the glad tidings of salvation. He told him, with trembling voice, his trouble of soul, his fear of death, and his burning desire to find forgiveness of his sins; he said he did not know what to do.

"Major P. began to read to him a few passages of scripture, which tell of free grace, the gift of God, the love of the Lord, &c. The old man listened with close attention; his heart began to appre-

hend the meaning of those precious words, and his face shone with joy. Suddenly he exclaimed, Oh, it is enough ! Now I possess what I had longed for ! Thanks to God ! The good man forgot in his joy his duty as driver. The reins and whip fell out of his hands, while big tears rolled down his cheeks—tears of joy and thanks to God. His lips were unable to express his gratitude, his happiness had made him dumb.

“ Major P.’s young friend was obliged to sit on the box, and drive the horses ; the good old man was quite unable to do it. Major P. had him in the carriage, to speak to him of Christ and His work ; His love, and all that He has done for us, and the place that He has prepared for us with the Father. The poor man, now our brother, listened with delight, only interrupting, from time to time, with an artless, child-like question. He cannot read ; is very untaught ; but now he possesses what he needed. He does not know anything but that Christ died for him, and that he is washed from his sins by His blood ; and that suffices to give him eternal joy. Is not that wonderful, dear brother ? Yes, God is worthy to be ‘admired’ in all His ways. Who would have thought that the laming of a horse could have led to the turning of a soul to Christ ?”

Has the reader thus passed from death unto life ? Your privileges may be a marvellous contrast with this poor anxious Russian. Never before had he

heard the glad tidings of forgiveness through the blood of Jesus. There, as he sat on the box, was he born of water and of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost, there and then, used the word in the washing of regeneration. And at once he received what mere carnal ritualism can never impart. Christ was set before Him—His work, His love ; and all that He has done for us. Not what we have done for Him, but what He hath done for us ! That one sacrifice on the cross surely is a perfect work. God bears witness to it, for He hath raised Him from the dead. Oh, guilty, heavy-laden soul, from the throne of God is proclaimed to thee forgiveness of sins. The poor man from the wood believed God. Yes, it was the word of God to him. He now knows that Christ died for him, that he is washed from his sins by His blood, and that suffices to give him eternal joy. Can you say, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin ? Then does not this suffice to give you eternal joy ?

Let us adore our God, that He is thus spreading His blessed gospel in Russia. And while we give thanks let us also bear the beloved saints these on our hearts before the throne of grace. Very fast is He gathering in His redeemed ones ; soon we shall see His face, and be for ever with the Lord.

MAN WITHOUT GOD.

MAN is without God and is himself lost. Such is the sad and awful consequence of his sin and turning away from God. What could be more terrible for the creature than to lose the knowledge of God? But such is the case with man in his natural condition. He is without God and without the knowledge of God in this world. "God is not in all his thoughts." And when His claims are pressed, how often does man exclaim, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Man was not created thus. Ah, no; man's present condition is not the handiwork of God, or the fruit of His work as Creator. God created man "upright," in "his own image, in the image of God created he him." (Gen. i. 27.) All was perfect, and the Creator pronounced it "very good."

Whence, then, comes the change, the ruin, the curse, the fall, the darkness and distance, from God by man? Alas! man, the dependent, responsible creature, the head of the lower creation, has turned away from God, has followed Satan, believed his lie, and despised the word and goodness of his Creator and God. Sin in all its corrupting, devastating, separating power, has come in, and broken the peace and blessing of Eden, separated man from God, and made him a guilty wanderer in the earth without God; and so fully is he without God, that apart from the teachings of His Spirit,

he does not like to retain God in His knowledge ; he desires that his mind should not be burdened with the thought of God. He says, "I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Oh, reader, how terrible is this ! How awful is the power and results of sin ! *And you are a sinner.* May God in His almighty power give you to awake to the fact. A sinner, without God, and yourself on the road to judgment. What could be more sad ?

Not only this, but man has become the enemy—the active enemy—of the One to whom he is indebted for every blessing that he enjoys. God makes His sun to rise upon the evil and the good. Man takes the blessings and despises the One who sends them. Man by subjecting himself to Satan has imbibed the spirit of Satan—he is hostile to God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. viii. 7, 8.) " Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." (James iv. 4.)

But let it not be supposed that man has lost his responsibility or accountability. It is written, " That every idle word that man shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment ; and " God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Matt. xii. 36 ; Eccles. xii. 14.)

At the Great White Throne, those who stand there will be judged, "every man according to their works." (Rev. xx. 11-15.)

But how can man be reconciled to God? If man is guilty and defiled, and separated from God—a poor lost being—how can he be saved?

For man to know God, and to be restored to Him, there must be a revelation made of Himself, and the putting away of man's sins. There is cause and effect. Sin is the cause, and man being without God and become a guilty being, are the effects. Sin, the cause, must be put away, and that by Him who is the perfect revelation of God to man. Man knows not God; Christ the only-begotten of the Father, the Incarnate Word, has revealed Him. God has come near man and revealed Himself in the Person of His beloved Son. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John i. 18.) How infinitely blessed that God has thought fit, in matchless grace, thus to reveal Himself to man when without God, and who himself was lost in his sins! It is not "by searching" that man finds out God, but by God revealing Himself to him.

Cannot we bless God, beloved reader, for thus making Himself known; coming out, notwithstanding man's unclean and rebellious state, and displaying Himself in the blessed character of love and grace in the Lord Jesus? How this

subdues and wins the heart of man to God ! Man's confidence in God was lost through his belief in the lie of Satan ; it is established again, as he beholds God thus revealed, not as his enemy, as Satan would have him believe, but as a Friend.

How precious are the words of Christ! "All things are delivered unto me of my Father ; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father ; *neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*" (Matt. xi. 27.)

There are two classes : "The wise and prudent" (self-satisfied sinners), and "babes" (those who confess themselves ignorant, helpless, and undone). This wondrous revelation of God in Christ is hid from the "wise and prudent," but, blessed be God, it is revealed unto the "babes." The self-wise, and therefore the self-deceived sinner, is rejected, while the trembling babe, the conscience-smitten one, the helpless, weary, heavy laden one, is accepted, and learns and receives God in His blessed and adorable Son.

The knowledge of God and confidence in Him thus is rest, sweet and blessed rest. To the latter class, Christ addresses Himself in Matthew xi. 28: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Ah, yes ; to get back to a forsaken yet gracious God is indeed rest. The unrest of man's heart is the sad consequence of having got away from God. "Come unto Me"—the revelation of God—"and

I will give you rest," said Jesus. This knowledge of God as a Saviour brings rest and deliverance from that which caused the separation and loss—sin and guilt.

But sin must be put away. How wonderful! He who revealed the Father and declared God, because He was God, though become a man, has put sin away ; and therefore has a right to say, "Come unto me and I will give you rest."

How wonderfully clear is scripture on this point. May our souls listen with deep reverence to the following declarations: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds : who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, *when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.*" (Heb. i. 1-3.)

Here, then, the One who is declared to be "the brightness of God's glory and the express image of his person," has "by himself purged our sins," and having done that, "sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high."

May all who read these lines know the joy and the eternal blessedness of coming to Christ, and knowing Him as the *Revealer of God*, and the *Purger of our sins.*

THE SCRIPTURES.

No. 2.

JOSHUA having been assured, by direct communication from Jehovah, of the divine origin and authority of the writings of Moses, was also taught that his success in the service of God would be connected with his observing to do according to all that Moses commanded, without turning from it to the right hand or to the left. Thus Joshua had sacred *writings* committed to him, which were to be regarded by him as the word of God.

We find also that Joshua *wrote* on an altar to the Lord God of Israel. “He *wrote* there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he *wrote* in the presence of the children of Israel.” And to shew how really he owned the divine authenticity of the writings of Moses, we are told that “afterwards he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is *written* in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.” (Josh. viii. 32-35.)

The prophet Samuel was also a writer. He “told the people the manner of the kingdom, and *wrote it in a book*, and laid it up before Jehovah.”

(1 Sam. x. 25.) We read also that Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amos, *wrote* the acts of Uzziah first and last. (2 Chron. xxvi. 22.)

“Jeremiah *wrote* in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt *read* all these words, then shalt thou say, O Jehovah, *thou hast spoken against this place.*” (Jer. li. 60–62.)

Daniel tells us that he had a dream, and visions of his head upon his bed, and he *wrote* the dream. He also acknowledged the divine authenticity of sacred writings, for he tells us that he “understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem ; and he also owned the divine authority of what is “written in the law of Moses.” (Chaps. vii. 1 ; ix. 2, 11.)

The prophet Hosea says, “I have *written* to him [Ephraim] the great things of my law.” (Chap. viii. 12.) Jehovah said to Habakkuk, “Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.” (Chap. ii. 2.) The Psalmist said, “My tongue is the pen of a ready writer” (Ps. xlv. 1) ; and the wise man exclaimed, “Have not I *written* to thee excellent things?” (Prov. xxii. 20.) These instances are enough, we judge, to shew that writing was a means ordered by God

for communicating and treasuring up divinely-given truth, and that it was practised and acknowledged by His servants.

Scriptures, or sacred writings, with all the value of divine authority, were also recognised throughout Old Testament times. As we have seen, the statutes written in the law of Moses were to be kept; and when the people of Israel had a king, it was said, “He shall *read* therein all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes to do them. (Deut. xvii. 18.) Joshua taught the people “to take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of Jehovah” had given. (Josh. xxii. 5.)

In David’s day, Jehovah brought a breach upon Uzzab, so that he died before the ark, because the king had not sought to do the work after the due order; but when he, and those with him, acted as Moses commanded, according to the word of Jehovah which had been written, then they brought up the ark of God with gladness. (See 2 Sam. vi. 7, 8; 1 Chron. xv. 13, 15, 28.) In David’s dying charge to Solomon, he enjoined him to “keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as *it is written* in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself.” (1 Kings ii. 3.)

Even Amaziah, though he did not do that which

was right as David his father had done, yet he owned the authority of sacred writings, for we find, when he executed judgment on those who had slain his father, that “the children of the murderers he slew not, according unto that which is written in the law of Moses wherein Jehovah commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers ; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” (2 Kings xiv. 6.)

King Asa “commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment.” (2 Chron. xiv. 4.)

“Jehoshaphat sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in his commandments ;” he sent also teachers who taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of Jehovah with them. In the battle-field he said, “Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem ; believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established ; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.” (2 Chron. xvii. 4, 9; xx. 20.)



“WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST? WHOSE SON IS HE?”

(MATT. XXII. 42.)

Written one hundred years ago.

WHAT think ye of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him.

As Jesus appears in your view,
 As He is beloved or not;
 So God is disposed to you,
 And mercy or wrath is your lot,

Some take Him a creature to be,
 A man, or an angel at most:
 Sure these have not feelings like me
 Nor know themselves wretched and lost:
 So guilty, so helpless am I,
 I durst not confide in His blood,
 Nor on His protection rely,
 Unless I were sure He is God.

Some call Him a Saviour in word,
 But mix their own works with His plan:
 And hope He His help will afford
 When they have done all that they can:
 If doings prove rather too light
 (A little they own they may fail,)
 They purpose to make up full weight
 By casting His name in the scale.

Some style Him the Pearl of Great Price
 And say He's the fountain of joys,
 Yet feed upon folly and vice,
 And cleave to the world and its toys;
 Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,
 And while they salute Him, betray;
 Ah! what will profession like this
 Avail in His terrible day?

If asked, what of Jesus I think?
 Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
 I say, "He's my meat and my drink,
 My life, and my strength, and my store;
 My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,
 My Saviour from sin, and from thrall,
 My hope from beginning to end,
 My portion, my Lord, and my All."



CORRESPONDENCE.

23. "D.," Hereford. The portion of scripture to which you refer (Jer. xxxiv. 18-22), gives part of the prophet's testimony concerning God's judicial dealing with Zedekiah the king, and his people the Jews, for their dreadful sins in transgressing His covenant, and practising the idolatrous wickedness of the heathen in passing "between the parts of the calf." The prophet assured them that Nebuchadnezzar would be the instrument in this destruction, for God would command him to return to the city, fight against it, take it, burn it, and leave it "without an inhabitant." We know how solemnly this was fulfilled, and what unparalleled tribulation still awaits the Jews before they are brought into their promised blessing. Surely "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." May we, his children, have grace to walk humbly and obediently before Him !

24. "A.," Saxmundham. Competent judges have considered that the passage "when he had supped" would be more properly rendered, "after having supped." The same words in the original are translated "after supper" in Luke xxii. 20. That the Lord did eat the passover with His disciples is without question, for He touchingly said, "With desire I have desired to *eat this passover with you* before I suffer." At the supper, we are told He gave thanks for the bread and also for the cup—emblems of His own body given, and of His own blood, which was so soon to be poured out. Beyond this, scripture does not say much. We judge when scripture is silent, it becomes us to be silent also. In Luke xxii. 14-18 it is clearly the

keeping of the passover ; but from verse 19 we have the institution of "the Lord's supper." The truth concerning "the Lord's table" is not revealed till 1 Corinthians x. 16-21, and has been well nigh forgotten throughout Christendom.

25. "M.," Gibraltar. Yours received. Thanks for your kind desires. We have hearty fellowship with the truth expressed. Our limited space compels us to say that we have not room for a tenth part of the poetry which is so kindly sent.

26. "W.," Clapham Junction. Your kind letter has reached us. The thoughts expressed in it are good, though perhaps scarcely in keeping with our line of service.

27. "S.," Haddington. With regard to the quality of the wine used at the Lord's table, nothing is found in scripture ; to be raising difficulties then about such a matter, seems to us to savour strongly of a legal spirit. Besides, the soul that knows what it is to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," rejoices in the precious fact that the great point in the Lord's supper is to remember Him, and "shew his death till he come." It is Himself, therefore, that such have before their souls. In our judgment the mistake is to raise such questions ; and we believe the only remedy for those who present such difficulties, is the apprehension, by faith, of what God has revealed as to our present and everlasting standing in Christ, the gift of the Holy Ghost as God's seal and earnest of our inheritance, and a happy sense of the unchanging relationship of "children of God," into which divine grace has brought us in Him, "in whom we have redemption through his blood." When these great and eternally-blessed realities are grasped by faith, then the Lord Himself becomes

the one Object of the heart, and we have neither time nor inclination for unprofitable questions. Scripture says, " Be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, and not with meats which have not profited them which have been exercised therein." (Heb. xiii. 8, 9.)

28. "N.," Barnstaple. We do not undertake to reply to questions by anonymous writers. If the case referred to be true, we could not but deeply feel for any child of God who has been so caught in Satan's snare. At the same time, it is always well that God's children should remember that "with God nothing shall be impossible," and also that "all things are possible to him that believeth." It is a sad case; but "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven." Waiting *on* God, and *for* God humbly, with thorough self-judgment and confession to Him, He will make the path so plain, and order circumstances so graciously, that His erring one, if truly before Him, will see His hand, have sure guidance, and find Him better than all our fears. The path is clearly to do nothing without thus having His *sure* guidance.

29. "D.," Whitby. The Psalmist was inspired to write, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering, and whole burnt-offering: then shalt thou offer bullocks upon thine altar." (Ps. li. 18, 19.) Thus, without a shadow of doubt, we are taught, that, though in past times when sacrifices were offered, about which it is said, "in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had *no pleasure*," yet when Zion's time of favour and blessing comes, they will be again offered, and

"*then*" God will "*be pleased.*" The smoke of the burnt-offering will be constantly giving out its "sweet savour," and telling of the "savour of rest" Jehovah has found in the perfect surrender of Jesus His Son, in His obedience unto death even the death of the cross.

From Ezekiel xliii., xliv. we further learn that when the people shall be restored and blessed, the land set in order according to the tribes of Israel, and the sanctuary built according to divine directions, and the glory fills the house, then the priests, Levites, prince, and princes of Israel shall all be in their proper places. The people having been forgiven their iniquity, and the inhabitant no more saying, I am sick, will have their true Messiah reigning before His ancients gloriously. Then all the feasts will be kept except Pentecost. Sacrifices of sin-offering, burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, meat-offerings, and trespass-offerings, will be offered. They will, no doubt, be commemorative, bringing forcibly to remembrance the varied aspects of Jesus the Son of God, who loved His own, died for that nation, and made good to them, on redemption ground, all the promises to Abraham, and all the royalties of David, to the glory of God.

30. "W.," Barnstaple. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing [reckoning] their trespasses [offences] unto them" is a plain statement of holy scripture. (2 Cor. v. 19.) But, in it we have not the Saviour's death, by which we who now believe have been reconciled to God. (2 Cor. v. 18.) Had God been in Christ reckoning unto men their offences, then all must have been for ever condemned. But, blessed be His name, the Son of God came not to judge and condemn, but to save sinners; so that instead of

reckoning to men their offences, he proclaimed forgiveness of sins, and delighted to bind up a sin-convicted heart. His sphere of reconciliation was not confined to Israel, though He had a special mission to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" but the blessing of God through Him flowed out to Samaritans and Gentiles, as well as Jews. In Christ's early ministry He said, "God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) See how delighted and ready He was to bless a Samaritan sinner, to honour the faith of a Centurion, or a Canaanitish woman, as well as fill a broken-hearted sinner with peace and joy, who cast herself at His feet in the house of Simon, as well as bless many other sinful and helpless in Israel. No doubt all blessing was in view of His death.

Had God reckoned their offences unto them, who could have escaped judgment? or, who could have received blessing? Not one. "God *was* in Christ reconciling;" the enmity was only on man's side. It was God come down in love; not in righteousness or law, but in grace. Observe it does not say God reconciled, but *was* reconciling—this was God's bearing in Christ. But we know the love was rejected, "the world knew him not," and "His own received him not"—yet He died for the ungodly. "The ministry of reconciliation" is "Be reconciled, for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 20, 21.) Now divine grace flows from Christ in heaven to sinful man on earth, in consequence of an accomplished redemption. Blessed are those who are now "reconciled to God by the death of his Son."

“THE LAMB OF GOD.”

“And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God. Again, the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.”—John i. 34-36.

CHRIST is essentially the Son of God. His eternal Godhead and perfect manhood are remarkably brought before us in this chapter. Not only was He in the beginning with God, but was God, and was the maker of everything. “All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” (Ver. 3.) He was also Life and Light. There is no other Light. He truly said, “I am the light of the world.” Men may be blind and not discover the light, yet is He “the true Light which lighteth [not enlighteneth] every man that cometh into the world.” (Ver. 9.) But though the Word was with God, and essentially and eternally God, yet, when the time fully came, “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” In appearance like another man, found in fashion as a man, “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” yet faith and the spiritual eye could see in Him “the Son of the living God,” and trace a glory which was wholly unutterable; all that one could say when speaking of Him was, “We beheld his glory,” (His uncreated glory) “the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.” (Ver. 14.) Thus

the glory of the Son of God shines through the pages of eternal truth.

The Baptist is introduced in the chapter, because he was our Lord's forerunner ; and he delighted to declare the glory of the One he announced. He repeatedly said, " After me cometh a man which is preferred [takes a place] before me ; for he was before me." (Ver. 30.) He informs us of his being sent to baptize in order that Jesus might "be made manifest to Israel." But who could this mysterious person be, of whom John could thus speak as being both "before" him and "after" him ? He was *before* John as Creator of everything, and *after* John as born into the world some months after the birth of John. Though John was the prophet of the Highest, yet Jesus was the Son of the Highest; and the Baptist, when thinking of His greatness and glory could only speak of himself as a "voice," and confess that he was unworthy to unloose the latchet of His shoe. John was told by divinely-given instruction, " Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." (Ver. 33.) This we know was literally fulfilled, when, as the heaven opened over Jesus, and the Spirit, in bodily shape as a dove, descended and abode upon Him, a voice from heaven declared, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." John knew therefore unquestionably the Deity of the person he thus baptised, so that he adds, " And

I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.” (Ver. 34.) Marvellous as the fact is that “the Only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father,” and who “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” should be found here “in fashion as a man ;” yet how immeasurably deeper was the step He took when He willingly became a sacrifice for sin upon the cross ! Yet such was His path of unfathomable grace. Hence we find in this chapter, immediately after John had declared Him to be the Son of God, he proclaims Him also to be “the Lamb of God.” “Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.” (Vers. 35, 36.) John had previously announced Him as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,” because He will yet, in virtue of His death and blood-shedding on the cross, so entirely eradicate every trace of sin from the earth and the heaven, that, in the new heaven and new earth, instead of sin reigning unto death, righteousness will be dwelling. Thus the sphere of blessing to be introduced by “the Lamb of God” was to extend far beyond the range of Israel, as God’s gracious dealings had heretofore been principally confined to that nation. It is important to notice that it does *not* say which taketh away the *sins* of the world, as is sometimes wrongly quoted, for had that been true, then everyone must be saved ; but

He is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." (Ver. 29.) Though He "died for all," He was not a Substitute for all.—He was once offered to bear, [not the sins of all, but] the *sins of many.*" (Heb. ix. 28.)

Those who heard John thus speak must have been familiar with the truth of a lamb for a sacrifice. From the beginning, of sin's entrance into the world, God had shewn that the only way in which He could bring in blessing to man as a sinner was by sacrifice. Hence we read that His first act in meeting the need of His fallen creatures was by sacrifice—"Unto Adam also and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." (Gen. iii. 21.) The wickedness of the first offspring of Adam's race was to approach God without blood; thus ignoring the fall, and all God's testimony. This is a fashionable sin in Christendom now. The next of Adam's race was saved, because he brought to Jehovah, by faith, the firstlings of the flock—lambs, or goats; and, by this more excellent sacrifice, "he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts," &c. (Gen. iv. 4; Heb. xi. 4.) After this, when Abraham was journeying on to Mount Moriah to offer up Isaac according to the command of God, the young man said to his father, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering."

(Gen. xxii. 8.) From that time the true-hearted were taught to look for the Lamb which God would provide—"the Lamb of God."

Long after that, when the children of Israel were sheltered from the judgment of the destroying angel in the land of Egypt, their only safety was in the blood of the lamb. By that blood sprinkled on the lintel and door posts of their houses, they were assured by God of such perfect safety, that they could quietly remain that night in their dwellings, and feed upon the flesh of the lamb roast with fire, and that at a time when God's judgment of death was in every house round about them. How strikingly this reminds us of "the Lamb of God," and the perfect safety of all who are, by faith, now under the shelter of His precious blood! Afterward, in another way, the children of Israel were taught that no one could approach God, and live in His holy presence, but on account of the value of the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat. (Lev. xvi. 2.)

An instructed Israelite would also be familiar with the fact that every day the morning and evening sacrifice of a lamb was to be offered; also a weekly sacrifice of two lambs on a sabbath day; also seven lambs in the beginning of every month, besides the passover and other occasions. (Ex. xxix. 38,39 ; Num. xxviii. 9-11.) All these were typical shadows of "the Lamb of God." Hence when Jesus was manifested to Israel and known to

John as the Son of God, he, looking upon Jesus as he walked, said in the presence of two of his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God." It is in these special characters of "Son of God," and "Lamb of God," that He is now presented in the gospel, and thus endearingly made known to every one that believeth. When the Lord comes, and we have been caught up to meet Him in the air, a remnant of God-fearing Jews will arise who have been hidden like Nathaniel, but not unnoticed by the Lord, and will, like him, confess Jesus as "Son of God," and "king of Israel." This will introduce the earthly marriage-feast, when Jesus, and ourselves (his disciples), will be present; and when, in the all-sufficiency of divine grace, He will give healing and joy to His long-loved and deeply chastened people. He will turn their water into wine, purify His own chosen nation by judgment, and shew Himself as the resurrection and the life, and the One who fully knows what is in man. Thus chapters i. and ii. of John's gospel, after unfolding the essential characteristics of the Son, give a striking sketch of dispensational truth.

To return to our verses. What a sacrifice of infinite value must "the Lamb of God" be, who is also "the Son of God!" The two disciples heard the word of God's messenger saying, "Behold the Lamb of God!" and their eyes were fastened on Him at once; and so captivating was He to their hearts that they went after Him. O the marvellous

attractiveness of Christ! “The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” (Ver. 37.) Does the reader know what this is? Have you heard God’s testimony to “the Lamb of God”? Has the awakening word “Behold” fallen upon your heart with such power, as to turn your whole soul to Him as the only Saviour? The word was not “Do,” or “Give,” or “Be this,” or “Try that;” oh, no, it was “Behold!” His word by a prophet was, “Look unto me [only look] and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” His word by an apostle was, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” His word from His own gracious lips was “Come!” Thus the drawings of divine grace are expressed by such words as “Behold,” “Look,” “Believe,” “Come.” Does the reader truly say, I do *behold*, I have *come*; I do *believe*, I can *look*? Then to such He becomes the attractive Object of the soul. He not only satisfies our need, but He also wins our hearts.

Since the testimony of John, the Lamb has been slain, sins have been judged, and redemption has been accomplished; after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, He for ever (in perpetuity) sat down on the right hand of God. Soon Jesus will be beheld “a Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne” (Rev. v.); and, in millennial times, the glory of God will be seen shining through the Lamb: for it will be then said, “The glory of God

doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof;" while "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it," and living blessings flow like a river out of "the throne of God and the Lamb." Happy indeed are those who are then manifested as "the bride, the Lamb's wife."

There He is now on the Father's throne. The Son of man is glorified, He is not now on the cross, not now in the sepulchre, but He is on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens. To Him *there* the Spirit directs the eye of faith. There we look, and there is life in a look at the glorified One. When the eye first rests on Him there as "the Lamb of God" who has been slain for us, the heart becomes so drawn to Him, so engaged with Him, that we want to dwell with Him. This was the case with the two disciples. And what then? The Lord responded to their faith at once. He turned to them. He addressed them personally, lovingly, pointedly. He said unto them, "What seek ye?" He well knew what they were seeking ; but He loves to hear the confession of our own attachment to Himself. They replied, "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" As much as to say, it is Thyself we seek, Thyself we want, nothing but being with Thyself can satisfy our souls. How true this is! With such the heart-felt utterance surely is—

"Less than Thyself will not suffice,
For Thou art ample store;

More than Thyself I cannot crave,
Nor canst Thou give me more.”

Their longing hearts were then blessedly met with the Lord's sweet words, “Come and see!” Yes, His arms were opened wide; His heart delighted in them. He whom they first looked at as a Saviour, they now know as “a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” They came and saw where He dwelt. He drew them, and they went after Him. This is not law, but grace; not the effort of the natural man, but the action of divine love endearing Him to their hearts. They abode with Him that day. We are told it was about the tenth hour, that is about four o'clock, and they remained till six alone with Jesus. What a privilege! What wondrous disclosures must have been made to their souls at that two-hours interview! Can we wonder at one result being that they immediately sought to bring others to Jesus? And is it not equally true now, that those who have been really brought to look to the glorified One—the Lamb of God—as their Saviour, do follow Him, do cleave to Him, do delight to tarry in His presence, and do seek to bring others to Him? Oh yes. One of these two disciples was Andrew (afterward an apostle), and his whole soul was filled with such joy in the Lord that “He first findeth his own brother, Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ, and he brought him to

Jesus." (Vers. 41, 42.) Blessed conclusion of the day's employment! What joy on earth is comparable to joy in the Lord, and the joy connected with His blessed service? But in this brief but touching narrative, let us not fail to see, that the divine order is peace, communion, and testimony; and this order remains always the same. The blessed Lamb of God now on the Father's throne must be first known as the object of faith, through whose blood we have remission of sins, and in whom we are accepted. Then follow communion with Him, dwelling with Him, participating in His own thoughts, His own delights, His own purposes, service, and ways; and then, as we are vessels filled with heavenly treasure, and overflowing with the grace of God to us in Christ, we seek to bring others to the same precious Saviour! God grant we may know this better!

Dear reader, Is Jesus the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely to your heart? Do you know His attractiveness—the drawings of His love? Can you say, "He loved me and gave himself for me"?



G I D E O N :

OR

"JEHOVAH-SHALOM"—"THE LORD SEND PEACE."

No. II.

WE have seen how the Lord took up this timid man who was nothing in his own eyes, the least in

his father's poor house, to give peace, and deliverance to God's people Israel: and how God gave him the assurance that He would be with him. How He also patiently gave him a sure token of His grace, in that He accepted his offering, which pointed to God's acceptance of our Sin-bearer when He raised Him from the dead for our justification. Then, Gideon's offering being accepted, fear fell upon his soul at the conscious presence of Jehovah. How the Lord spoke peace to him. This produced worship, and then arose the cry, Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord send peace. That very night the testing came. This will be the case with us, even as Jesus speaks to us in resurrection, "Peace unto you." Believing God, we are accounted righteous before Him, and being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Having peace with God, we worship God, but never till then. This produces the earnest desire to be the messengers of peace to others. But if the great camp of the Midianites (to us of worldliness), is to be attacked, where must we begin? With Gideon, we have seen, it was *at home*. The young bullock must be killed, and his father's shameful altar to Baal must be thrown down.

We will now trace the effects of this faithfulness at home. Is it not remarkable that this act of obedience to the Lord was used of God in converting Gideon's father, so that he said that the altar

of Baal was a shameful thing? And is it not a shameful thing for a Christian to be linked with this world, and with Satan the god of it? and especially to be linked with the world's false worship?

If there be, however, true faithfulness to God, the hatred of the world will be aroused. "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east, were gathered together." Yes, as surely as you enjoy peace with God, and your heart in worship cries, "Lord send peace;" this giving energy to throw down the altar of Baal, at whatever cost; then buckle on your armour, the whole armour of God, and look out. Satan will bring the power of the world to destroy, if possible, at least all enjoyment of peace, worship, and testimony. "But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." The sealed believer has more than this; for his body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. "And he blew a trumpet, and Abi-ezer was gathered after him." Now what a reward is this; he blew the trumpet, and the very men that wanted at first to kill him, are the first to be gathered by the sound of that trumpet. You say that was the power of the Spirit, true it was. The servant of the Lord now, having the same blessed Spirit dwelling in him, may sound the gospel trumpet in faith; and count on God bringing the greatest enemies of that truth to obey the call of salvation. Oh, how much there is in this to encourage the servants of the Lord!

And now, having taken the true place of humility, and entire dependence on the Lord, and in the power of the Spirit, he sent messengers to Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Napthali ; and they came up to meet them. Again, there is exercise of heart in this servant of Jehovah. He says "if" again. The moment we look at ourselves we may well say "if." But God bore in grace with His exercised servant. The dew was caused to fall on the fleece, and it was dry round about ; and again it was dry in the fleece, and the dew round about. Many of God's servants have known similar experiences. Sometimes one may experience overflowing blessing in one's own soul ; and yet it be dry to those around. And again we may seem like Gideon's dry fleece, and yet divine blessing to souls around. Thus we may learn the lesson, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

We now come in chapter vii. to a very interesting point in Gideon's history, and the people that were with him. "They rose up early and pitched beside the well Harod." Now it is a serious matter to "be pitched" in decided testimony for the Lord. We might here ask the reader in the midst of the heaving confusion of these very last days, have you yet *pitched* for and with the Lord ? Here is a feeble man, and those with him, beside the well, and there is the host of Midian. What a picture of the church by the well on the one side, and the world on the other. Are you with the Lord, or with the

Midianites, that is, the enemies of the Lord? Has God spoken peace to your soul? that is one thing; and are you also pitched, in separation from the world, with the Lord? Can there be a more deeply solemn question, Are you really at this moment with the Lord or with the world? You may say the whole church of God is not thus pitched or gathered to the Lord. Many are devoured with worldliness—its politics, its wealth, its cares, or its pleasures. It was precisely so with Israel; many were devoured by the Midianites; they had scarcely time or place to eat a bit of bread; like many a Christian in this day.

But here was a large company who had taken the ground of testimony for Jehovah. Yes, the Lord said to Gideon there were too many. "The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest they vaunt themselves," &c. They were all of the tribes of Israel. That is not the point. They were too many for the testimony of the power of God, using utter human weakness. They had not learnt the lesson that "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," yea, "things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." It is very sweet to hear the soft sounds of the peace-giving gospel trumpet. But when we rise up early and see the whole world against us, like the vast host by the hill of Morah; ah, then,

how many pause and tremble, and fear to pitch in decided testimony to Christ! Yes, how many are afraid to remain gathered alone to Christ, like the company gathered to Gideon! But what saith the Lord? "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead." And how many went back? "There returned of the people twenty and two thousand, and there remained ten thousand." They were not excommunicated, but they returned to their tribes. It was not a division, but they gave up the testimony of Gideon when they saw the consequences. Some now living can remember this history repeating itself. Many were gathered to the testimony of Christ in these last days. The world was gathered by Satan against them, like the hosts of the Midianites, and many fearful Christians went back. They did not cease to be Christians, any more than the tribes ceased to be Israelites. They failed to remain pitched with Gideon. And many have failed to remain gathered alone to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the Lord said, "There are yet too many." Is not this the very opposite of all human thought? Man seeks to be prominent and eminent, and boasts of numbers. When do you hear men say with the Lord, "There are yet too many"? This second testing was even more remarkable than the first. The whole of the ten thousand were to be brought down to the waters. There was to be no human

choice of persons. The Lord said, "Whom I say unto thee, this shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, this shall not go with thee, the same shall not go." Now this testing is the more to be observed by us, as it may be the very sifting through which all gathered to Christ may be passing at this very time. Let us look then at the testing of the ten thousand men of Jehovah-Shalom. "So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself, likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink." Oh how few out of ten thousand were content to just take what was necessary, and stand in their ranks ready for service and victory! And how many kneeled down, seeking their own gratification to the full? Not one case escaped the eye of the Lord. "And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place."

Now let every soul professedly gathered to Christ pass before His eye. Not one escapes that eye. He knows how many to a man are pitched in decision for Him, content to take what is necessary, but ready for service and victory over the whole world. And He knows how many are seeking their own personal gratification to the full—living

for self. If we look at the worldliness that has come into the very camp professedly gathered to Christ, can we wonder that the Lord is saying of many, Let them go every man unto his own place? Is it not sad when the world is the *own place* of a Christian? Has not our Lord Jesus said of us to the Father, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"? How could the company with Gideon have possibly mixed with the host of Midian? Think of one of the three hundred going to vote at an election in the camp of Amalek! "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. vi. 14-18.)

Friendship with Midian must be enmity to Gideon. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of

God." (James iv. 4.) "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," &c. (1 John ii. 15-17.)

Thus there are three companies. The little company pitched with Gideon, the vast host of Midian and those with them, and the Israelites in their own place. In one of these is found every reader of these lines. Do you say it is a very serious thing to be with so few, and the whole world against you? It is, and if you are not quite sure it is the testimony of God, and that He is with you, far better never take such a solemn place of testimony. Nothing could have been more ridiculous in the eyes of men than this little company. The first thing named of them is this, "so the people took victuals in their hands, and their trumpets." Think of such a company meeting the French, the German, or the Russian armies! It would be evident, unless the power of God be with them, they would perish quickly to a man.

Yes, it must be just so with those who would serve Christ with purpose of heart. They must take their victuals in their hand. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." It is only as they feed on Christ, by His Spirit's teaching through the word, that they can sound the trumpet of salvation, and of judgment in this evil world.

In our next paper we hope to look at the question of complete victory over the world. Here

we would pause a moment and contemplate this feeble company gathered to Gideon. Does it not point to that feeble company gathered in the closing days of Christendom to the name of the Lord Jesus, "He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth"? Small indeed was the power of Gideon's little army. Three things were true of them. They had not denied Gideon, and returned to their place in the tribes. They had their victuals in their hand and their trumpets. Three things Jesus says of the approved little company gathered to Him who is the holy and the true. He says, "Thou hast a little strength." Yes, all boasting, all seeking of eminence, all self-importance, is far, very far from the approval of Christ; "and hast kept my word." Have we thus got our victuals in our hand? Can we say, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name?" (Jer. xv. 16.) Are His words unto us more than our necessary food? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." And again, Jesus says of the approved little company, "and hast not denied my name." (Rev. iii. 18.)

Now is it not striking how the Holy Ghost does gather a feeble few to the name and person of the Lord Jesus, in the midst of the worldliness of Christendom, just as this feeble but ready-for-ser-

vice little company was gathered to Gideon ? There they stood with their victuals and their trumpets, when thousands had gone back to their tribes and their own places.

Very beautiful was their decision for Gideon. Oh ye children of God who may read these lines, do we answer to this picture ? Are we thus decided for Christ ? Are we bowing down to drink, seeking our own mere gratification, with the nine thousand seven hundred ? or, receiving strength by food to pass on for service and testimony for God, are we still gathered to the Lord Jesus with the word of God in our hands, and the trumpet ready to sound as He shall bid ?

Let us not be deceived. Surely there can be no holy separation to Christ if we are yoked with the world. Would the three hundred have been true to Gideon, if seeking the pleasures, the politics, or the wealth of the hosts of Midian ? No more can we be true to Christ, if our minds are set upon the things of the world.

What is then the path of the feeble few who desire to know and do the will of the Lord ? We do not see how the three hundred could be charged with division because they remained true to Gideon, when thousands went back. Neither do we see how those can either, who, however few they may be, are still kept faithful to Christ. The Lord search our hearts by His holy word, and keep us by the power of the Holy Ghost.

THE SCRIPTURES.

No. III.

In a time of much evil, after breaking down the house of Baal, with its altars and images, Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the Lord, &c., as it is *written* in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing as was ordained by David. (2 Chron. xxiii. 17, 18.)

In Hezekiah's reign, there was a remarkable turning to the authority of the sacred writings. They soon discovered that they had not kept the passover "for a long time in such sort *as it is written*;" we are told therefore that the men of Judah had given them by God one heart to do the commandment of the king, and of the princes by *the word of Jehovah*. Moreover, Hezekiah appointed morning and evening burnt-offerings, and the burnt-offerings for the sabbath and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is *written* in the law of Moses. (2 Chron. xxx. 5, 12 ; xxxi. 3.)

In the days of Josiah, king of Judah, the wonderful revival is traced to the practical acknowledgment of the divine authority of the scriptures. It was brought about by Hilkiah the priest finding in the house of the Lord "a book of the law of Jehovah *written* by Moses. And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord . . . and Shaphan *read* it before the king. And it came to

pass when the king heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes." The reason was that he learnt from these writings that they were justly exposed to divine wrath, and the curses written in the book, because of their sins in having forsaken Jehovah their God, and having burnt incense to other gods. They, therefore, bowed to the authority of the sacred writings, and kept the passover according to the ordinance "*as it is written* in the book of Moses," which was accompanied with God's abundant blessing. They were so exercised by the authority of scripture about it, that we read that the king's commandment was, "kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that they may do according to *the word of Jehovah* by the hand of Moses." We are further told that the evil and "*abominations* that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were *written* in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord. And like unto him was there no king before him, that *turned to Jehovah* with all his heart, and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all *the law of Moses*; neither after him arose there any like him." (2 Chron. xxxiv. 14-19, 24; xxxv. 6, 12, 18; 2 Kings xxxiii. 24, 25.)

The return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, was also strikingly marked by their acknowledgment of the authority of the written

law of Jehovah. We know that "Ezra was a ready scribe in the law of Moses which the Lord God of Israel had given;" and so truly did he recognise the divine authenticity of the sacred writings, that we are told that "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek *the law of Jehovah*, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." We read also that when they were gathered together as one man at Jerusalem, they "builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, *as it is written* in the law of Moses, the man of God they kept also the feast of tabernacles *as it is written*. Again, when the temple was finished, they dedicated the house of God with joy, they offered a sin-offering according to the twelve tribes of Israel, and they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God which is at Jerusalem, *as it is written* in the book of Moses."

(Ezra iii. 2 ; vi. 15-18 ; vii. 6, 10.)

When Nehemiah was the king's cup-bearer, we read that he fasted, and wept, and prayed unto God, and pleaded *the word* which He had commanded by His servant Moses, and written in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. And when the wall was completed, the people gathered themselves together as one man in the street, and spake to Ezra the scribe to bring *the book of the law of Moses which Jehovah commanded to Israel*. This he did, and read therein, and all the people were at-

tentive unto *the book of the law*. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, and others caused the people to understand the law so they read *the book of the law of God* distinctly, and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading. And they found written in *the law* which *Jehovah commanded by Moses*, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths ; “for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also, day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of *the law of God*.” Moreover, we are told, that after this “they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.” (Neh. i. 9 ; viii. 1-18 ; xiii. 1-3.)

It is most interesting to observe here that the faithful who returned from the captivity went back for divine authority to that which had been ordered of God from the beginning, and not to any particular period or revival, but stood for what had been written, apart from all traditions of men ; and is not this always the path of the faithful in an evil time ?

CORRESPONDENCE.

31. Swansea. Presenting our bodies a living sacrifice as in Romans xii. 1, is yielding ourselves up, in the activities of the members of our natural bodies, in obedience to the word of God, as constrained by "the mercies of God," previously brought out in this Epistle. This must be connected with the sacrifice of the claims of self, and the lusts of the flesh.

32. "M." Newport. Thanks for your kind and encouraging letter, and the enclosed verses. The Lord be praised for all the goodness and mercy you speak of in connection with this little Magazine.

33. "M. A. H." Hastings. It is remarkable how many souls have been troubled with the texts you point out. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb. x. 26, 27.) And also that other scripture, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c. . . . If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (Chap. vi. 1-7.) Now if these scriptures mean, as often understood, that if a believer should sin, and for a believer to sin is to fall away from Christ, and cease to be a child of God; if this is the meaning, then who can be saved? This would make the Christian's position far worse than a Jew's. Once a year there was the day of atonement; or, if he sinned, and his sin came to his mind, he could bring another sin-offering. But

here is no more repentance, no more restoration : nothing but fearful judgment named in the text quoted ; this cannot possibly be the meaning. This Epistle is addressed to the Hebrews. The multitude that believed were also zealous for the law. (Acts xxi. 20.) The temple still standing and its sacrifices, that could never take away sins, still offered. The Jews had had much elementary truth, but not the perfect truth ; and the object of the Spirit is to lead them on from the imperfect to the perfect (Chap. vi. 1, 2) ; from the baptisms and laying on of hands, that is, on the heads of bulls and goats, &c., to that which was perfect—the one offering of Christ. It was a transition state. They were assembling together as purged worshippers by the blood of Jesus, and, yet not understanding the difference, were offering sacrifices. And some were forsaking the assembling of themselves as Christians. Now it is quite clear, if any fell away from Christianity, that which they had professed—gave it deliberately and wilfully up, and went back to the washings and offerings of the law—there could be no such foundation laid again of repentance. The sacrifices and ritual of the law had lost all value now Christ the Holy One had offered Himself the sacrifice for sins.

And more, for a Jew to give up Christianity and to go back to Judaism, he would have to treat Christ as accursed, to trample upon Him as an imposter. If then one that despised Moses' law died without mercy, "of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God," &c. (Ver. 29.) Those who did thus go back were never born of God, were not the children of God. To use the figure of chapter vi. 7, "The earth which

DRINKETH IN the rain that cometh oft upon it," &c. They had been in the blessed shower they had tasted, but they had never *drank it in* so as to bring forth fruit. They were the stony ground, way-side hearers, who had never received the truth into a prepared heart. "We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." (Chap. x. 39.) Have you thus given up Christ, trampled Him under foot, and gone wilfully to Judaism? We admit there is an awful warning in these verses to the Unitarian, who has given up the atoning death of the Son of God. And perhaps equally solemn to those who deny the eternal efficacy of that one sacrifice, by pretending to continually offer up others. To the believer the context of these scriptures clearly teaches the eternal salvation, eternal redemption which we have in the one sacrifice, the one offering that for ever perfects those that are sanctified. (Heb. v. ix. x.)

34. "J.," Walker-on-Tyne. Though the word "resurrection" may not be found in the Old Testament scriptures, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body was clearly taught, and the fact known. Our Lord went back to the books of Moses, when meeting the Sadducees, who denied there was any resurrection, to establish the doctrine from scripture. He said, "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob; for he is not a God of the dead, but of the living, for *all live unto him.*" (Luke xx. 37, 38.) Job also said, "Though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Chap. xix. 26.) Abraham accounted also that God was able to

raise up Isaac from the dead. (Heb. xi. 19.) In Psalm xvi. the resurrection of our Lord—path of life after death—was plainly foretold. “ My flesh also shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (hades), neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption : thou wilt shew me the path of life.” (Vers. 10–12.) We know that His flesh saw no corruption, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. (1 Cor. xv. 4.) People in Old Testament days were also acquainted with the fact of resurrection, for not only was the prophet “ revived and stood upon his feet,” when a man was let down and touched his bones in the sepulchre, (2 Kings xiii. 21) ; but “ women received their dead raised to life again,” as, for instance, the widow’s son, and the Shunamite’s son.

Our Lord taught more than the truth of the resurrection of the body. He distinguished between “ the resurrection of the just,” or “ of life,” and “ the resurrection of damnation,” or judgment, and, in the original, we see clearly that He set forth the doctrine of resurrection *from among* the dead. He said, “ They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from [from among] the dead,” &c. (Luke xx. 35.) He Himself is spoken of as “ the firstborn from [from among] the dead” (Col. i. 18), because others are to be raised from among the dead. This distinction has been overlooked by many.

The mystery brought out in 1 Corinthians xv. 51, refers to the living saints when the Lord comes, because it begins with “ We shall not all sleep.”

GIDEON'S VICTORY:

OR,

“JEHOVAH-SHALOM”—“THE LORD SEND PEACE.”

No. III.

We now come to Gideon's victory. “And the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.” (Judges vii. 8.) It is important for the man of faith to know that, however vast the host of the enemy may be, it is “*beneath him in the valley.*” We must not expect victory unless we know our dead and risen position in Christ. Greatly increased was the host of Midian. “And the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude.” Great the power and ever increasing the worldliness of Christendom. But all were beneath Gideon in the valley. What is your stand-point? Are you in the worldliness, like Lot in Sodom? Or are you consciously in Christ, and the world beneath you, like Abraham, when he looked down on the doomed plains beneath him? and like Gideon, as he looked down on the hosts below? It is written, “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

The faith of Gideon was in God. In himself there was great weakness; it is so with us. The first step must be according to his position.

The Lord said unto him, “Arise, GET THEE DOWN unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.”

How important, then, it is to be in our right place. How can we get down, if we are down? If of the world, how can we be used in testimony, any more than Lot was? Had he not to be pulled out of it? How little is real separation to Christ understood in this day? And perhaps quite as little the true place of the believer, as dead and risen with Christ.

“Get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thy hand.” Now mark the secret of the Lord. Not by might, nor by power. There lay the vast hosts of the enemy. Gideon was bidden to go down, and hear what they say. “And when Gideon was come, behold there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell. . . . And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel; for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.” This is God’s way—His principle. “God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things which are mighty.” It was not the thunder of an eighty-ton gun that affrighted the hosts of Midian. It was “a cake of barley bread.”

Was it not so when destructive famine was about to devastate Egypt and the countries around? A cake of barley bread was placed in the court of Pharaoh. A poor despised young man, forgotten and cruelly wronged, lay in one of Egypt's prisons. That was the cake of barley bread whom God made lord of all Egypt—the deliverer, Joseph. In a later day, when the children of Israel groaned in bitter bondage, a little helpless babe was heard crying in a basket of rushes, exposed on the banks of the Nile. That little babe was the cake of barley bread tumbled again into the court of Pharaoh. That little babe was the chosen instrument by which God overthrew the hosts of Egypt, and delivered His people. Again, when Philistine hosts defied the trembling armies of Israel, a ruddy youth was tending his father's sheep. This young David was the cake of barley bread tumbled into the valley of Elah. David was the chosen deliverer of God's people. Again, who is that cake of barley bread in the mighty court of Assyria? Daniel, the *captive* of Judah. But all these disappear when we contemplate the lowly path of the Eternal Son of God made flesh. Though God over all, blessed for evermore, yet He made Himself of no reputation. The perfect expression of humility and dependence. Not one atom of Satan's usurped world would He accept.

And when He had accomplished redemption, risen from among the dead, ascended to glory,

and sent down the Holy Ghost, who were the men chosen, and sent forth as His ambassadors into the world? Again, it is still the cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian. Poor fishermen, who had no artillery but the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. What a picture of this was Gideon's little army! "And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, *that he worshipped*, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian." Beloved reader, is this the effect on you? If the Spirit give you the interpretation thereof, you will see that it is not by outward show, by numbers, by learned books, learned scholastic lectures, or by great and learned men; but that God is glorified in using the feeblest instruments, the nobodies. Does the interpretation thereof bow our hearts in worship? It is no question with Gideon as to numbers: the little company of three hundred are to faith the host of Israel. THE LORD HATH DELIVERED; this was enough for faith. Strong in faith, "he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers." Every eye was then to be fixed on himself—as he did, so were they to do. "When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

Thus they brake the pitchers, and held their lamps, and they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. "And they stood every man in his place." In the judgment of man nothing could be more contemptible. Yes, these three hundred are a striking picture of the chosen servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, of that ministry and testimony which is truly of God. The apostle says, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. . . . For God, who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. iv. 5-7.) Now is this our position, gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, like they were to Gideon? Are our eyes fixed on Him, not of the world, even as He is not of the world? Are we as separate from this world as they were separate from Midian? Are we every man in his place? Are you in yours, am I in mine? Not of a tribe or sect of our own choosing, are you sure you are where God has placed you? Each believer was so in the church as the Holy Ghost formed it. (1 Cor. xii.)

We would call special attention to these words, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." That devoted servant of Christ, Paul, could thus speak, satisfied to be less than nobody. But what Gideon's pitchers were on that dark

night, and as he commanded the light to shine from those broken pitchers, those earthen vessels ; so now, in this dark world, are we, who have this treasure in earthen vessels. What a treasure, what a light in a dark place—the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And the power of this testimony is the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. What a picture this is of the utter weakness of man and the mighty power of God ! A broken earthen vessel. But the light shines, the trumpet sounds. The victory was complete ; “and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.”

From the days of the apostles to this moment, it will be found, that the spiritual power of the church, or the remnant out of what arrogantly calls itself the church, has been in proportion to its weakness. The barley cake in the host of Midian has ever been repeated. What a path was that of Paul’s ! A broken earthen vessel. In stripes, in labours, in prisons, in deaths oft; beaten, stoned, shipwrecked. And what perils, what weariness and painfulness, what watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, nakedness. (2 Cor. xi.) And in history how God did use the poor men of Lyons, as they were called—the poor sufferers of the valleys ; and in this country, when Wycliff sent out the poor priests to preach Christ through the length and breadth of the country.

Surely we are in great danger at this time in

forgetting the cake of barley bread. It is evident, just as we seek to be, and become prominent, we fail in the testimony of God. Let God decide as to numbers, the question for each soul is this, Do I answer to these devoted three hundred? Am I in my place, gathered to Christ, my eye fixed on Him, seeking to walk as He walked? Have I the light in the pitcher, oil in the vessel? No wonder, where persons take the place of profession, like the foolish virgins without oil, without Christ, that they should become one with Midian. Surely this is the closing scene of the dark night of a worldly Christianity. Now, are you a light in this dark place? Oh, let us awake, for "the night is far spent, the day is at hand."

What is the watchword of victory? "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." If we are truly gathered to Christ, what have we? The sword of the Spirit; that is, the word of God and the Holy Ghost.

Gideon pursued the host to Jordan, the well-known figure of death and judgment. This is the great principle of the Christian's victory over the world, and every lust of the flesh. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him in baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even we also should walk in newness of life." This is the true killing-place

of the lusts of the flesh, and all the worldliness that has come in. Whatever temptation may assail, pursue it to Jordan. No prince or king lust must be spared ; death to it. For sin has been judged on the cross. Our very sin has been for ever judged in the person of Christ on the cross. Shall we live, then, in that which has been put to death on the cross ? But we are not only reckoned dead with Christ, but we are also risen with Christ. " Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth ; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Col. iii. 1-5.)

Though, as we see, this principle of death is our very profession in baptism, yet how little it is owned in practice ! The Lord give us grace to judge everything inconsistent with our place, as dead and risen with Christ. What can be so offensive to God as to take this place, and then follow the fashion and practices of the world ? Jordan was the place of Gideon's victory. Death is the Christian's victory. Dead to sin, dead to law, dead to the world ; crucified with Christ, risen with Christ. Reader, there must be reality in all this. These are the last days. There must be decision for Christ, our true Gideon, our true centre.

Gideon failed after all this in the matter of the ear-rings. The Captain of our salvation never fails. We may fail, He never fails. Twenty thou-

sand of us may fail, and go back—ah, and ten thousand more ; but God's word remains the same. Christ is the same. Like Gideon's army numbers may have to be less, but as they all looked at Gideon, and did as he did, so may we have our eyes fastened on Christ, God over all blessed for evermore. Yes, what a path of humiliation ! “ He made himself of no reputation.” Can we be doing as He did if we seek the opposite of this ? Have we not done so ? Instead of taking the lowest place, yea, of being nothing, have we not assumed to be important, and in various ways sought prominence ? Blessed be God for coming in to humble us. Oh, to be the barley cake again. If each believer was like one of the lamp-bearers in his place —everyone in his place—what an effect it would have ! If each who professes to be in the testimony of God were so, what an effect it would have in this dark night ! “ Among whom ye shine [or shine ye] as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.” Do we hear this word from the Lord ? He expects each one to be a light-bearer, and to shine in the world. The darker the night, the brighter the light. Only, not self, but Christ !

Gideon's victory was blessing and peace for all Israel. Let us never forget this : though called to take the most decided stand for Christ and with Christ, like Gideon's little army, yet it is that the heart of Christ may flow out in its infinite love to the whole church of God. Thus keep us, dear

Lord, and thus use the least of Thy saints, in Thy boundless love to all. And thus grant that we may be as separate from the world, and all its ways, as Gideon's little army was separate from the host of Midian! What a thought, that He desires each believer to be a light in this dark night!

GUIDE ME, FATHER.

Guide me, Father, with *Thine eye*,
 Teaching me Thy mind to know ;
 As I gaze upon Thy face,
 When, and where, and how to go,

Guide me, Father, with *Thy hand*,
 Every hour upholding me,
 Never left to be alone,
 Happy in Thy company !

Guide me, Father, with *Thy love*,
 Drawing heart and soul to Thee,
 That Thy love's exhaustless stream
 May refresh continually.

Guide me, Father, with *Thy truth*,
 Every footstep well defined ;
 As a loved, obedient child,
 Loving still to know thy mind.

By Thy Spirit, Father, guide,
 Light and power along the road ;
 Mould me more like Thy dear Son
 Till I reach my blest abode.

A. M.

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.

“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”—
PSALM xxii. 1.

WHO can describe the suffering of the Son of God when He poured out His soul unto death? when His sorrowing heart gave forth that bitter cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” One apostle had betrayed Him, another had denied Him, and all His disciples had forsaken Him and fled, and now God turned away from Him. Man had been mocking, deriding, spitting upon Him and scourging Him, and had degraded Him to be numbered with malefactors; darkness had covered the whole land for three hours, and now the spotless, perfect Man, Christ Jesus, is forsaken of God, so that He cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” There never was such a cry heard before, and never will be again. No one now who could truly say, *my* God, is ever forsaken of Him; and by-and-by, when the lost are for ever forsaken, cast out from the presence of God, no one there will be able truthfully to say, *my* God. The marvel in this cry on Calvary is, that the One who could say, in the perfectness of faith, and love, and truth, “*My* God,” was forsaken by Him. But so it was, and Spirit-taught souls learn the precious lessons of divine grace which it teaches, bringing present

peace, and hope of eternal glory, to all who believe on His name.

As man, He could always say to Jehovah, "Thou art *my God*." Though equal with God, the only-begotten Son, one with the Father, yet, being found in fashion as a Man, He took a servant's form, and, as the perfect Servant, it was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. In life, He so abode in communion with the Father, that He could say, "Father . . . I knew that thou hearest me always;" but in the death of the cross it was, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

David wrote this cry by the Holy Ghost, and thus predicted, a thousand years before its fulfilment, that Messiah in His suffering would say these words; and we find in the gospels they were the very utterance of the Saviour when hanging on the cross. Nor does the psalm contemplate them as the expression of any other than He who bare our sins in His own body on the tree. He said of Himself, what none other could say, "I was cast upon thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly." "Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts." Of what other babe than He could such he said, who was born in Bethlehem, of whom the angel Gabriel had said to Mary, "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God?" (Luke i. 35.) Besides, as One who was specially

connected with Israel, He said, "Our Fathers trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them but I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people." Thus He felt He had not the common privileges that those among the nation of Israel had been accustomed to have, for He cried, and was heard not. He was forsaken of God.

The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father before the world was, when the fulness of time came, was sent forth, made of a woman; "He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." He came to save, to redeem, and therefore to die for the ungodly. He glorified the Father on the earth. He finished the work which the Father gave Him to do. His death as a sacrifice for sin was for the glory of God. The good Shepherd, laying down His life for the sheep, was so infinitely perfect, that it was another motive for the Father loving Him; hence He said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. . . . This commandment have I received of my Father." (John x. 17, 18.)

The death of the cross stands perfectly alone. It never can be repeated, and, because of its eternal efficacy, will never need to be repeated. No creature can utter the sorrows, or describe the suffering of Golgotha, when Christ "bare the sins of

many." In that dreadful hour His soul was "full of troubles," His strength was dried up like a potsherd, His tongue clave to His jaws ; all His bones were out of joint, and His heart was like wax melted in the midst of His bowels. But oh ! the deep sorrow of that unutterable agony when God, who sent His own Son, condemned sin in the flesh, so that the suffering One cried out, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring ? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent.*" When reproach had broken His loving heart, and the Holy One had been smitten and scourged, His hands and feet pierced ; when there was no angel sent to strengthen, no lover or friend to cheer ; when the sun was forbidden to light up the scene ; when man was mocking and deriding, and Jehovah bruising, putting Him to grief, and forsaking Him ; still, it was in the perfectness of faith—" *My God, my God.*" He also justifies Jehovah, and worships, saying, "But thou art *holy*, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." (Ps. xxii. 3.)

The Son only could thus glorify God. No one but the Man that is the Fellow of Jehovah of hosts could thus sheath in His own heart the uplifted sword of divine vengeance. No one but He who had infinite capacities could drink to the very dregs the cup of God's just judgment of sin. No

one but the Rock of ages could endure such waves and billows. Only the Holy One of God could be made sin and a curse for us. The spotless Son of man only could be our “Surety.” None but the Good Shepherd could die for the sheep. None but Jesus, the Son of God, could or would save us. And what a sacrifice ! What infinite, what eternal blessedness must flow from the accomplished work of the Son of God, “who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our evil Father.” (Gal. i. 4.) Well hath it been said—

“Jesus, bruised and put to shame,
Tells me all Jehovah’s name :
God is love, I surely know,
By the Saviour’s depths of woe.”

How wonderful, that the Son, by whom the worlds were made, should bear our sins in His own body on the tree ; that the “Prince of life” should be “killed ;” that the “Just One” should be “numbered with the transgressors,” and yet make “intercession for ~~the~~ transgressors ;” that “the Son of the Highest” should go “into the lower parts of the earth ;” that “the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father” should be “taken by wicked hands, crucified, and slain ;” that “the Lord of glory” should be found here on earth “nailed to a tree ;” that Jehovah’s righteous Servant, his elect, in whom his soul delighted, should be so abandoned in the extremity of bitterest anguish as to

cause Him to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What infinite perfections are clustered together here! What profound lessons of grace, holiness, righteousness, truth, and peace are here given for our learning!

What distress, what pain, what ignominy, what woe, did our adorable Emmanuel pass through, when He suffered for our sins under the righteous judgment of God! What man, or angel, could grasp or utter the full meaning of such unsearchable sorrow and suffering! No line is long enough to sound its depths! No created space could hold the deep waters that came into His soul. No thought can reach what He must have passed through to satisfy for ever divine justice as to our sins. We are told that "He bare our sins," "suffered for sins," and "died for our sins according to the scriptures;" but what was involved in this sin-atoning work, we believe no creature ever will be able fully to enter into, any more than what is finite can comprehend what is infinite. But we know for our comfort that the cup of full, unmixed judgment due to sin was then drunk; and if the anticipation of it caused Him to "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," what must have been His grief and suffering when "it pleased Jehovah to bruise him," and to "make his soul an offering for sin"? Again, we may inquire, what must have been the magnitude of the work of the cross, when we contem-

plate some of the results? Did He not love the church, and give Himself for it? Did He not, as Israel's King, die for that nation? Will not creation itself have all its groanings hushed, and be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God in virtue of His death on the cross? Did He not make peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven? And will not the new heaven and new earth, in which righteousness will dwell, be the everlasting witness that Jesus was the Lamb of God who bore away the *sin* of the world?

The death of the cross not only stands alone in its eternal efficacy, but it is matchless in the sorrow and love which met there. No comforters to soothe are in attendance, no hand stretched out to assuage His bitter grief, none to sympathise; and, as He said, "none to help." Not a drop of mercy is mingled with the cup of God's just judgment of sin. No compassionate friend relieved His sufferings. He knew all that should come upon Him. He endured the cross. He despised the shame. His whole heart's desire was that the Father might be glorified; for He loved the Father, and He also loved us. Wondrous *love*, yet unutterable *sorrow*! The stern sword of the Lord of hosts was lifted up with inflexible justice, and must be bathed in blood! The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the floodgates

of heaven were opened ; deep called unto deep ; the thunders of Sinai roared ; and all the foaming waves of offended justice, all the righteous demands due to sin rolled over the meek, and loving, and obedient Jesus. He is forsaken of God. He dies for the ungodly. The Lamb without spot is slain, to "perfect for ever them that are sanctified."

And why was all this suffering ? Because Jesus was the Sin-bearer. The glory of God demanded that our sins should be judged. Yes, God must judge sin. He has no other way of dealing with it ; nor could He save us unless our sins were judged, for God is just. The righteous God loveth righteousness. Jesus only could bear our sins, because He was perfect man, and without sin. God sent Him to save us, and He willingly came, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Having glorified God as man on the earth for more than thirty years, the time came for Him, according to the counsels and grace of God, to be a sacrifice for sin ; so God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Therefore "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities," that by His stripes we might be healed. This is why the perfect, loving Saviour was forsaken of God, and this is why He died ; for the wages of sin is death, and He died for our sins according to the scriptures. But God raised Him from among the dead, and set Him at His own

right hand, where He now is, crowned with glory and honour.

How the contemplation of this unutterable suffering melts our souls ! We think of the love, the sorrow, the pain, the shame, the bruising and forsaking, until the language of our hearts is—

“ In His spotless soul’s distress,
I perceive *my* guiltiness ;
O how vile *my* lost estate,
Since *my ransom was so great.*”

Dear reader, Is all this tale of unparalleled love and sorrow nothing to you ? Is such grace to sinners of no moment ? Does the dolorous cry of the sinner-loving Jesus, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ” fail to melt your heart ? What ! Can you read and hear of such matchless love, and be unmoved ? Do you not know, that if you refuse this precious Saviour, and His atoning work upon the cross, you will have to be for ever forsaken of God, for ever banished from His blessed presence, for ever under the wrath of God ? Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ? for He died to save sinners. He lives in glory, and receives and saves sinners. God waiteth to be gracious. He delighteth in mercy ; and, in virtue of the blood of His Son, can righteously save ; and every soul that comes to God by Him He will save. Dear reader, why not come now, for He is a just God and a Saviour ?

THE SCRIPTURES.

No. 4.

THUS far we have confined our remarks almost entirely to the testimony of the ancient scriptures as to the *written* word, because our object has been chiefly to shew that, ever since the writings of Moses, God's people have recognised the divine authority of the written word. But, besides the books of Moses, God has from time to time added to them by various instruments, and especially by prophets, who not only enforced the divine authority of what had been written, but also *spoke* authoritatively with, "Thus saith the Lord;" or, "The word of the Lord came;" and the future blessings of God's earthly people were by them largely spread out, to cheer the faithful, and to animate them with hope. Though such as were thus employed were men of like passions with ourselves, yet to assure us of the authentic character of their ministry, and that they gave out the words of Jehovah we are told, that "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. i. 21.) All the prophets call earnestly upon the people to be subject to the word of Jehovah, for they declared that they spake His words.

Isaiah said, "Seek ye out of the book of Jehovah, and read;" and on another occasion he said,

Thus saith *Jehovah*, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at *my word*.” And again, “Hear the word of *Jehovah*, ye that tremble at *his word*.” He also exultingly cried out, in contrast with the frailty of man, “The word of our God shall stand for ever.” Besides this testimony to the truth of the words which he ministered as being the word of God, he reproves the wicked in Israel, because they “cast away the word of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.” The prophet further assures them that “*Jehovah* hath spoken.” He said, “Hear the word of *Jehovah*.” “Thus saith the Lord, *Jehovah* of hosts, the mighty One of Israel.” (Chaps. xxxiv. 16; lxvi. 2, 5 ; xl. 8 ; v. 24 ; i. 2, 10, 24.)

Jeremiah repeatedly says, “Thus saith *Jehovah* unto me;” and, “The word which came to Jeremiah from *Jehovah*;” and so sensible was he of the divine authority of the words he communicated to the people, that we find him saying, “Thus saith *Jehovah*,” and, “Hear the counsel of *Jehovah*.” So divinely true were the words to his own conscience that he calls them God’s words; he says, “*Thy* words were found, and I did eat them, and *thy word* was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.” Again, we hear him saying, “*The word of Jehovah* was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in

his name, but his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." (Chaps. xiii. 1 ; xviii. 1 ; xix. 1 ; xv. 16 ; xx. 8, 9.)

Ezekiel says, "The word of Jehovah came unto me ;" and, "The word of Jehovah came expressly unto Ezekiel ;" and, "Again the word of Jehovah came unto me," is many times repeated in his prophecy. He was also commanded to *write*. Jehovah said unto him, "Thou shalt *speak* my words unto them ;" and in a vision he saw "a roll written within and without." So assured was he that what he declared was the word of God, that he said, "The word that I *speak* shall come to pass," and "the word which I HAVE SPOKEN shall be done Thus saith the Lord God." (Chaps. vii. 1 ; i. 3 ; xvi. 1 ; ii. 7, 10 ; xii. 25, 28.)

No one can have carefully considered the book of Psalms, without seeing the value and authority of the word of God frequently set forth. It opens by marking one point in the righteous man being, that he meditates in the law of God day and night; and in Psalm cxix. almost every verse speaks of the word, statutes, commandments, or law of the Lord. Not only does it speak of the purity of the word itself, and its cleansing virtue, but its divine authenticity is so regarded, that he says, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver ;" and, "I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." (Ps. i. 2 ;

cxix. 9, 72, 127.) David was one of those holy men of old who was moved to speak by the Holy Ghost.

Daniel, as we have seen, owned the writings, or "books," of Jeremiah as "the word of Jehovah," and also "the oath that is *written* in the law of Moses, the servant of God," and that God had confirmed His word which He spake against us "as it is written in the law of Moses." We know that the God of heaven made known and "revealed" wonderful things to Daniel, and used him to communicate His mind both concerning the times of the Gentiles and His own people; some things concerning them having since been accomplished, and much remains to be fulfilled. (Dan. ix. 2, 11-13; ii. 19, 28-44.)

The other prophets generally ascribed the authenticity of their ministrations to God. In Hosea it is, "the word of Jehovah that came unto Hosea." (Chap. i. 1.) In Joel, "The word of Jehovah that came to Joel." (Chap. i. 1.) Amos said, "Thus saith Jehovah." (Chap. i. 3.) Obadiah said, "Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom." (Ver. 1.) In Jonah it is twice said, "The word of Jehovah came unto Jonah." (Chaps. i. 1; iii. 1.) Micah begins with, "The word of Jehovah that came to Micah." (Chap. i. 1.) Nahum says, "Thus saith Jehovah." (Chap. i. 12.) Habakkuk tells us, "Jehovah answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he

may run that *readeth* it." (Chap. ii. 2.) Zephaniah begins with, "The word of Jehovah which came unto Zephaniah." (Chap. i. 1.)

The testimony of the prophets was nearly completed before the Jews were carried away into Babylon. We have only three post-captivity prophets —Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Haggai distinctly affirms that his word was "the word of Jehovah," and that it came to him at different times. He announced it authoritatively with, "Thus saith Jehovah." (Chaps. i. 1, 7 ; ii. 1, 7, 20.) Zechariah also asserts the divine source of his solemn and beautiful utterances, when he says, "The word of Jehovah came unto Zechariah." (Chap. i. 1, 7 ; vii. 1 ; viii. 1.) Malachi also introduces his testimony with, "The burden of the word of Jehovah to Israel by Malachi." It is well to observe that this last Old Testament prophet presses, in Jehovah's name, the divine authority of the writings of Moses, saying, "Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." (Chaps. i. 1 ; iv. 4.)



THE word and will of God was the rule and motive of Christ in everything. To tempt God is to try whether God will be as good as His word.

CORRESPONDENCE.

35. "L." Burgess Hill. Every one who has forgiveness of sins, has also eternal life. Both (and much more), are given to all who believe on our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts x. 43 ; John iii. 36.) The enjoyment of these wondrous blessings is another thing. 1 John v. 13 is an important scripture for these days of laxity and declension.

36. "Whitby." It is clear that Paul will recognise and rejoice over the Thessalonian saints when the Lord comes. He said, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.) It is well to be silent about points on which the word of God gives us no information. Is it not enough to know we are going where there is "no more death neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things have passed away?" (Rev. xxi. 4.)

37. "T. H. F." Southport. "And the dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thess. iv. 16.) The Thessalonian believers who had been taught to wait for God's Son from heaven, were evidently surprised, and filled with sorrow, when some of their number died, or fell asleep in Jesus. This scripture was given to comfort them, and us, in like circumstances. It refers especially to those of the church of God who fall asleep. That we who are alive and remain until the Lord comes for His saints shall have no advantage or precedence over those who sleep in Jesus; for the first act will be the raising up of these saints from among the dead, before we are changed. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them

in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," &c. There is no danger of our being taken up, and leaving the precious dust of a beloved saint in the grave. How gracious of the Lord thus to comfort our hearts ! As we stand at the brink of the grave, He whispers, Do not sorrow overmuch ; I will not come and take you to glory, and leave that loved one behind. No, I will raise them first, and then you shall all come together to be for ever with me. Oh, blessed hope ! We take, then, the dead in Christ in this scripture to mean specially those who have fallen asleep in Jesus since the day of Pentecost.

"They that are Christ's." (1 Cor. xv. 23.) This scripture no doubt includes all that are Christ's, not only of the church, but also the Old Testament saints ; and the myriads of the little ones, for He came to save the lost. The distinct order of resurrection is thus revealed : "Christ the first-fruits ; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end," &c. More than eighteen hundred years have passed between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of those that are His. And when the first resurrection shall be complete, a thousand years must intervene before the resurrection of the rest of the dead. (Rev. xx.)

The marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven shortly before He comes to judge the earth, and reign over it (Rev. xix.), shewing also the marked distinction between the bride of the Lamb, who is complete—"his wife hath made herself ready"—and those who shall be raised to complete the first resurrection. (Rev. xix. 7 ; xx. 4, 5.)

The meaning of Hebrews xi. 39, 40 is simple when we remember this was written to believing Jews or Hebrews. Neither their fathers in the Old Testament, nor themselves, had received the

fulfilment of the promise ; and not only so, God has provided, or foreseen, some better thing for us ; that is the peculiar calling and glory of the church. This is not fully explained in Hebrews, as the church is not the subject of the epistle. But how much is implied in those few words, " God having provided SOME BETTER THING for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Both will be raised together. They are not yet perfected, that is in resurrection ; but they will be, being Christ's at His coming. It is during the days of this period of His rejection that this better thing was foreseen ; being now one with the man Christ Jesus in heavenly glory. Ephesians explains this better thing for us. Oh, the riches of His grace, for God to take out of a world which has rejected and crucified the Son, those for whom is provided that in which the saints of the Old Testament have no place ! Some better thing. This could not have been said had they belonged to the church. They will, however, be in the glory, and of them it will be said, " Blessed are they that are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." (Rev. xix. 9.)

38. "A Constant Reader," United States. Ephesians ii. 8 has been often discussed by learned theologians. Whether, according to the grammatical construction of the passage in the Greek, the words, "it is the gift of God," refer to one or other of the words in the sentence, seems to us to be not of much importance to humble souls whose hearts are set on glorifying God. The great point in the verse is that our salvation is all of grace, and not on the principle of works, but on the principle of faith. All is of God to us in the way of grace.

39. "H.," Sheldwich. In the book of Joshua Israel is seen as a nation called to possess an earthly

inheritance in conflict with flesh and blood, that is, with living nations in Canaan. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, the church is seen not called to an earthly inheritance, nor to wrestle or fight with nations on earth; but "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." As Israel had crossed the Jordan, and were blest with Joshua in possessing the land of Canaan, so the church has passed through death. "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Where Joshua was, there was the place of Israel: where Christ is, there is the place of the church—in the heavenlies. And, in like manner, as Israel's conflicts were earthly, with man on earth, so ours is with the enemy in the heavenlies.

Only we would observe, that both the place that Satan has as the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience (Eph. ii. 2), and also the place that wicked spirits have still in the heavenlies, is greatly overlooked. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in the heavenlies." (Chap. vi. 12, margin.) Perhaps Milton's poetry has displaced from some minds these scriptures. But it is important to remember these facts of scripture. There is both a personal devil—Satan, the god of this world, and personal devils of great power in the heavenlies—ever seeking to overthrow us, and hinder our communion with our Lord Jesus Christ. But greater is He that is for us than all they that be against us.

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.

No 2.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Luke xxiii. 34.

THAT Jesus would make "intercession for the transgressors," was prophesied by Isaiah seven hundred years before its actual fulfilment; as also that He would be so despised and rejected as to be "numbered with the transgressors," when He "poured out his soul unto death." His perfect patience and unfailing meekness were also foretold; for of Him, on whom Jehovah had laid the iniquity of us all, it was said, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Nor was the prophetic testimony silent as to His trial at the judgment-seat of Pilate, His death, and burial; for it is written, "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Men who preferred a robber, like Barabbas, to Jesus, so that they all cried out, "Not this man, but Barabbas," treated the Son of God as if He were a wicked man in crucifying Him between two

thieves, and taking Him down from the cross, and burying Him that day, putting Him into “his grave with the wicked ;” yet the body of Jesus was laid in the sepulchre of “a rich man,” Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, and a good man and a just.

Not only was it foretold that the Son of man should be crucified, that His hands and His feet should be pierced, but it was also declared that not one of His bones should be broken ; though He would say, “all my bones are out of joint.” (Ps. xxii. 14.) And so exactly did the fulfilment agree with the prophetic word, that, though the legs of the thieves were broken according to the customary mode, they did it not to Jesus. When they came to Him they found that He was dead already ; and this was the reason assigned for not breaking His legs. But God was above all. His purpose must be exactly carried out. His word had gone forth fifteen hundred years before that it should not be, and it was not ; though men have no idea that in what they did, or in what they did not, the word of God was being fulfilled. When God declared His mind by Moses about the paschal lamb, which we know was a striking type of the Lamb of God, He said, “Neither shall ye break a bone thereof.” (Ex. xii. 46 ; Num. ix. 12.) Therefore it could not be, for the scripture cannot be broken. The exact fulfilment is thus recorded in John’s gospel. The Jews “besought Pilate that their legs might be

broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs ; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. . . . For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken ; and again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced." (Chap. xix. 31-37.)

Moses also wrote concerning His burial, and that He would be taken down from the tree on the same day as His crucifixion. Having been made a curse for us, "for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree," it was ordered that the body should be buried that same day ; which we know was in the case of our Lord literally fulfilled : though the reason assigned for so doing was the preparation of the sabbath, and that sabbath being an high day. The prophet said, " If a man be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree : his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day." (Deut. xxi. 22, 23.) John, in his gospel, referring to this, says, " The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day (for that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate After this Joseph of

Arimathæa besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus ; and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore and took the body of Jesus. . . . Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden ; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day." (John xix. 31-42.)

It would be most interesting and profitable, did our limits admit of it, to trace in scripture the prophecies concerning our Lord's person—the Virgin's Child, Immanuel ; His birth at Bethlehem ; His life of sorrow and grief ; His miracles ; His rejection—the Stone which the builders refused ; His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver by one who had eaten bread with Him ; His death by crucifixion, with transgressors, but He as an offering for sin ; His burial the same day, and laid in a rich man's grave ; His resurrection on the first day of the week, "the Morrow after the sabbath;" His glorification and session on the right hand of Jehovah ; His priestly service ; His coming again in judgment, to restore Israel as His own nation, and His reigning on David's throne, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." (Is. xi. 9.) A consideration of scripture on these points certainly shews how much it abounds with instruction concerning Christ ; and the observation of the accuracy with which much has been already fulfilled, war-

rants us to expect that what remains will have its accomplishment with equal accuracy.

In reference, however, to what is now more immediately before us, "the death of the cross," we shall find that the more we search the written word prayerfully, and in dependence on the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the more we shall be struck with the minute details it gives us. For instance, in Psalm xxii., it was predicted that the people, who would treat Messiah with scorn and mockery when hanging on the tree, would say, "He trusted on Jehovah that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." (Ver. 8.) And in the narration in the gospel of the facts which occurred a thousand years after, we read that those who were beholding Him on the cross, and mocked Him said, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God." (Matt. xxvii. 43.) How truly scripture is divine truth!

It is well to notice how the perfect fulfilment of what had been written concerning Jesus occupied His heart, notwithstanding all the intensity of the suffering and sorrow of the death of the cross. A verse in Psalm lxix. remained to have its accomplishment. We read therefore, "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon

hyssop, and put it to his mouth." This seems to complete the accomplishment of what had been written concerning Him, for we are then told, "When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished : and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." (John xix. 28-30.)

Again, as we have before observed, He who was "numbered with the transgressors," and bare the sins of many, was to make "intercession for the transgressors." Turning then to the gospel by Luke, we read, "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!" (Chap. xxiii. 33, 34.) No doubt this was partly answered in the gospel being used for the saving of so many Jews at Pentecost, and afterward ; but we look for its full answer when "Israel [as a nation] shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." (Is. xxvii. 6.)

In the death of the cross, the love of God was manifested. Types had faintly foreshadowed this love ; prophets had alluded to it ; Jesus Himself had preached it ; but, in the death of the cross, divine love to us came out in all its profound reality. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but

that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 9, 10.) God's love to *the world* was thus manifested. He was no longer confining His dealing with the people of Israel, but bringing in that which would have a world-wide significance ; and in virtue of the work of propitiation, enable God to proclaim it to every one and to save anyone through grace who has availed himself of the Saviour's death as the ground of being reconciled. The love of Christ to the church was also manifested in all its suitability and perfectness ; for "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Divine love thus came out ; so that now "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) Happy indeed are those who have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

How strange that any one, in the face of such a marvellous work as the death of the cross, should contend for doing something of his own to make peace with God. How sad, too, notwithstanding the clear testimony of the word of God to the infinite value of Christ's sin-atoning work, that men should imagine that they must add their own duties and religiousness to what Christ has done, in order to make their salvation more secure ! If any of our readers talk of *doing* for salvation, we can only say, that good works are the fruits of saving faith, and bring before them the word of God's

truth—"By grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. ii. 8, 9.)

" You've nought to do, for all is done ;
 That work's complete which Christ begun
 Only on it depend.
 You've nought to pay, for all is paid ;
 Without your help salvation's made ;
 God is no debtor to your aid,
 Christ's work you cannot mend ;
 Believe on Him your sins were laid,
 Then doubt and fear will end."

THE DYING INFIDEL.

To be a clever infidel is often connected with honour and importance among a certain class of men. Some, who wish to excel in arguments against the truth of God, hang upon their lips, admire their oratory, and commend them for their intellectual powers. Such it is with men when in health and vigour; but, when death stares them in the face, it is sometimes very different. They find then that neither oratory, nor argument, nor admiration of men will avail them anything. They feel life drawing to a close, and death near them, and some conscience within them. A few more sighs and groans, and then eternity. Oh, "that unknown future," say some, "how will it be then?" Some are much perturbed, others filled with remorse, and cry out, Too late! Too late! or "I shall be in hell at six o'clock," and such like. We

might enumerate many cases, but one has just come before us. A working man, who visited this dying man, says:—

“Last Lord’s day, I was requested to go a mile from this, to see a dying infidel, and pray by his bedside. I asked my Lord’s permission to go. I got His answer in my own soul to go. It took me one hour to walk that mile (being so unwell). But the Lord strengthened me, so that I arrived safely at the infidel’s house, and found a crowd of people gathered around the old man. I asked him what he wanted of me?”

He replied, ‘I want you to say a good prayer by me, that will take me to heaven.’

‘I never pray by the bedside of an infidel.’

‘Then you do not want me to go to heaven?’

‘Yes, I should like to meet you in heaven, but it must be on safer ground than saying a prayer to you.’

The old man replied, ‘What can be safer than prayer?’

I replied, ‘The foundation which God hath laid is the only safe ground for a poor sinner.’

The infidel then said, ‘Oh, put me on that foundation!’

I asked him if he would let me read God’s own word?

To which he replied, ‘Yes, I should like to hear it read.’

I at once looked to the power of the Holy Spirit

for guidance in this important matter, and, taking up my Bible, turned to chapter iii. of John's Gospel, and read from verse 14 to verse 21. Then I went back to verse 14, and shewed him what Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness was to those transgressors in that day ; and that it was a true type of Jesus Christ being lifted up on the cross for the sins of all those who see their need of Him as a Saviour. Then, as the blessed Spirit gave me words to speak, I set them before this poor old infidel. I shewed him from the word of God that Christ on the cross *for God* and *for the sinner*, was the only foundation which could be laid.

The poor old man then burst into a flood of tears, and cried out, 'Thank God for this foundation.'"

It is well for those who are building all their hope on the security of the foundation which God has laid in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ; "for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. iii. 11.) By the death of Christ alone can the sinner be reconciled to God. In a dying hour, the soul wants solid ground on which to rest, in the prospect of going into eternity.

"Eternity! eternity!
How long art thou eternity?
As long as God is God, so long
Endure the pains of hell and wrong;
So long the joys of heav'n remain,
O lasting joy! O lasting pain!
Ponder, O man, eternity!"

THE YOUNG BELIEVER'S DIFFICULTIES.

A DIALOGUE.

THE SUBSTANCE OF VARIOUS CONVERSATIONS.

No. I.

James. With your permission, John, before I state my difficulties, may it not be well to see first if we are agreed as to who are meant in scripture by believers? The words of the Lord Jesus you often quote to me, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation”—do not these words teach that a believer is born again—HATH everlasting life? That he has not merely assented with his mind: but receives the words of Christ into his heart, believing God who sent Him.

John. Certainly, James: and as said elsewhere righteousness is imputed, or reckoned unto us “if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. iv. 24; v. 1.) Such then is the believer. He hath eternal life, as Jesus says, “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” And, believing God, he is accounted righteous. He sees

his Sin-bearer once delivered to bear his sins, now in the presence of God his righteousness, raised from among the dead : sins all gone for ever, and never to be remembered any more. And, being accounted righteous, being justified on the principle of faith, he has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: and therefore always the same peace.

James. Very well ; now, then, bearing in mind that *we have*—for, through the mercy of God, we have believed God, and our ears have been opened to hear the words of Jesus—yes, we have these two things, eternal life, and unchanging peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. I will now state my difficulties.

John. Stay a moment first, James. You might have named much more. Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed ?

James. I have been much struck with that question lately. It is a very solemn one. Most Christians seem to go no further than our having life : but I see a great distinction in Acts viii. 16 ; xix. 2. It would be a very important question to examine fully, and I should like on another occasion to do so ; especially the difference between holding the Holy Spirit to be an influence, and, as scripture reveals Him, the very person of God the Holy Ghost. And, oh, to think that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost !

John. Then do I understand you to say that

you have since you believed, received the Holy Ghost?

James. It is a very solemn question, through grace I trust I can say so, though very young in the faith, and greatly desiring, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, to inquire more fully the meaning of the word of God.

The first scripture then I would name is Hebrews vi. If we have eternal life, and peace with God, what can this mean, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c. . . . If they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance ; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame?" There are many who feel this is a very difficult statement.

John. If this meant, that should a Christian in an unwatchful moment commit a sin, and thereby fall from Christ, that then there is no possibility of restoration, then indeed the difficulty would be insurmountable. Indeed plainly Christianity would be far worse than Judaism. A Jew could bring a sin-offering and his sin would be forgiven him, as is stated in Leviticus iv. And this was true whether of the whole congregation, or of an individual. Now surely this cannot be the meaning.

James. That certainly is clear : but then what does it mean ?

John. It is important to notice that this epistle was addressed or written to the whole of the

Hebrews who professed to be Christians, who were also zealous of the law, as James said : “Thou seest brother, how many thousands of the Jews there are who believe ; and they are all zealous of the law.” They were in a transitional state. The law was not the perfect or complete truth. It contained the first, or elementary principles, of the oracles of God. The effect of their remaining in this state was, that they could scarcely distinguish between Judaism and Christianity : they were dull of hearing. “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” (Heb. v. 12.)

James. Then is that what is meant, “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ” (or the word of the beginning of Christ) as in margin, “let us go on unto perfection”? Does this mean leaving the elementary principles of truth as known to a Jew, and going on to the complete truth, that is as revealed in Christ ?

John. Exactly so : and that makes all that follows very simple. Let us take up each clause. “Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.” They had done this once if Christians, they had judged themselves as guilty of rejecting the Lord Jesus, and putting Him to death ; yet faith toward God had owned Him, in raising up Jesus from the dead. This change of mind in utter self-judgment

had accepted forgiveness of sins in His name, and thus the only foundation had been laid, which could not be repeated. But as they were zealous of the law, they were in great danger of going back when they failed, as of old, to repeated offerings and repenances. You observe, James, Christianity as set up of God the Holy Ghost, was such a contrast to Judaism. The Christian has no temple, no ritual, no sacrifices, nothing for the eye to rest upon. All heavenly : all spiritual worship : no wonder there was such a tendency to give up the spiritual, and go back altogether to earthly visible worship.

James. I had not thought of that : then do you think it was to meet that tendency to give up Christ, and go back altogether to the law that this Epistle was written ? I mean to the washings of the law, the offerings, and shadows, and even truth as imperfectly revealed, or incompletely known by the Jews ? Does not the next clause mean christian baptism ?

John. If you look, it is not baptism, but "of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands." The same word is translated washings in chapter ix., "Meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances," &c.

That is, we must go on to Christ, the one offering, leaving behind the doctrine of all the various washings, of pots and pans : lepers, and priests of the law. And also all the laying on of hands on

the heads of goats and bullocks. We must go on from all that system of repetition, to the one sacrifice as brought out in chapters ix. and x.

James. That is new to me ; but when we think of the object of this Epistle it is clear enough. But tell me, how can we go on from the doctrine “of resurrection of the dead ;” is there anything more complete than that doctrine ?

John. The Jewish doctrine of resurrection of the dead is certainly true as far as it goes, and was held by the Pharisees, and all Jews, except the Sadducees, who, like the heathen philosophers, denied it. But the Lord Jesus taught a resurrection from the dead, or, plainly, from among the dead. (Luke xx. 35.) And have you not noticed this was the very thing that so grieved the Jews : that the apostles preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead ? The resurrection which is from the dead went beyond all their teaching, and greatly offended them. And was not this the mark at which Paul aimed—the resurrection from the dead (not of the dead), at which he longed to arrive ? (Phil. iii. 11-14.) And has not God been pleased to reveal that the rest of the dead live not again until the thousand years are fulfilled ? (Rev. xx.)

James. I had never thought of this important difference between the imperfect, or incomplete revelation to the Jews, and the complete christian truth in Christ.

John. I am glad to hear you put it that way: for though not explained in this Epistle, it is elsewhere. All this is linked with Christ the Head. We are conformed to Him in this, the first resurrection from the dead. It is the resurrection of them that are His. "But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming: then cometh the end," &c. (1 Cor. xv. 23.) I am sorry to say, James, instead of going on, the professing church for many centuries went back to Judaism, and merely held the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; and quite lost the christian doctrine of resurrection from the dead.

James. I will, the Lord helping me, give this subject a careful examination. But now the next clause, "and of eternal judgment." Is not the doctrine of a general judgment as held by the Jews true? Will not all stand together before the judgment to be tried? Is not this the doctrine of creeds and councils? Does not scripture say somewhere that it is appointed to all men once to die, and after death the judgment? And does it not say that the wicked and the righteous will be raised from the grave together, and be separated as described, the sheep on the right, and the goats on the left? &c. I do not see how these things can be from what we see is said of the first resurrection. But, John, why I ask is this, so many speak in this way, it puzzles one very much.

John. If you examine these scriptures you will find they are very much misquoted. By adding even a word the whole meaning is altered. Thus if we add the word "all" to Hebrews ix. 27, it alters the sense entirely. If you heard a fearful explosion in a coal pit, where three hundred hands are employed, and fifty had just come out, you might say that explosion is certainly the death of the colliers ; but would that mean the fifty who had been drawn out? Or if twenty men were under the sentence of death, and three received Her Majesty's free pardon, would that mean that the whole twenty were still under the sentence of death? It is quite true that all have been found guilty : all under the sentence of death.

"And as it is appointed unto men [not all men] once to die, but after this the judgment ; so CHRIST WAS ONCE OFFERED TO BEAR THE SINS OF MANY; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 27.) And now, James, if you will read that other scripture where the Lord Jesus describes the judgment of the living nations, there is not a thought of the resurrection of the good and bad together. There is not a word on that subject ; it is simply the living nations ; it is a judgment of the quick. Surely there must be a great difference between those still under judgment, and those already pardoned, and justified from all things? Her Majesty cannot pardon a man, and hang him

at the same time. Then how can God both justify a man, whose sins Christ bore on the tree, and also bring him into judgment? This does not touch the blessedness of standing before the Bema of Christ, His judgment for reward.

Thus the apostle would go on from the elementary truth, as known to the Jews, to complete truth in Christ.

James. Then is all in contrast between the doctrine of a general judgment as held by the Jews, and Christ having once borne the sins of many, to them there is no judgment for sins but looking for Him without any question of sin unto salvation? All I can say is, if that is the case, it is just the opposite of what I have been taught.

John. The word of God says it, and it must be so.

James. Then what was the difference between those who had *tasted* of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, *tasted* the good word of God, &c.; and the true believers who had eternal salvation?

John. They had been in the shower of Pentecost and afterwards, they had *tasted*, but had not (like the earth in verse 7) drunk in the truth. Like the seed by the way-side, there was no root. The hard ground had not been broken. The heart had not been prepared by the Holy Ghost to receive the word.

James. Then what did they fall away from?

John. If they fell away from the profession of Christ, and went back to the washings and offerings of the law, (just the thing they would do naturally), it was simply impossible now for those washings, and offerings, and carnal ceremonies, to restore them to repentance. Yea, for Jews to give up Christianity as a profession, they would, even to this day, have to treat Christ as accursed, as an impostor, "to crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." Will you read this chapter to the end, James? We must part now for a time.

James. I see now it is a question of a Jew who professed Christ going back to Judaism. I should like to look at Hebrews x. 26; If we sin wilfully, no more sacrifice, nothing but judgment, &c. When could you explain this?

John. If the Lord will, we will look at this scripture the next time we meet.



THE SCRIPTURES.

No. V.

WE have seen that sacred writings were recognised by the faithful in Old Testament times from the days of Moses, as the word of God; and therefore demanding implicit subjection, and continual obedience. They were not to "add unto the word," nor "diminish ought" from that which God commanded; and so indispensable was it,

that Jehovah instructed Israel that he might "know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live." (Deut. iv. 2 ; viii. 3.) But while God's people were called to hearken to, and hold fast, what He had revealed, and to obey it at all cost, yet it is well to observe how remarkably in these times, God's blessing was with those who honoured Him in obeying His truth, and how manifestly His displeasure followed those who turned away from it. Nothing can be more plainly marked. It runs all through scripture. It will be interesting to notice a few examples.

The disobedience of our first parents, in doing what was contrary to the word of God, has been followed with unutterable misery, to them and to their posterity. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. v. 12.) Cain became "a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth," for he refused to hearken to the voice of God, and do His will ; while Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, because he hearkened to the truth of God, believed it, and therefore honoured God in acting upon it. Noah believed God's testimony as to coming judgment, because men had corrupted the earth, and filled it with violence. He therefore, according to the word of God, prepared an ark to the saving of himself and his house ; while

the world was so overrun with infidelity as to reject the testimony of this preacher of righteousness, and was therefore swept away by divine judgment. Abraham was singularly blest and honoured in obeying the word of God, while just Lot vexed his righteous soul from day to day, had to escape for his life, and his posterity came under God's curse. All this could be traced to walking after the sight of his eyes, and doing his own will, instead of being subject to the will and word of God.

When God gave the children of Israel manna in the wilderness, He commanded that no man should leave of it till the morning. But some of the people hearkened not unto Moses, and left some manna till the morning, and it bred worms and stank ; and Moses was wroth with them. Whereas, when on the sixth day the Lord sent them a double portion so as to feed them also on the sabbath day, and they had therefore to lay it up to be kept until the morning according to the word of the Lord by Moses, it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. Again, we find there were some who would not believe God, that there would be none sent down on the seventh day, therefore some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws ? Scarcely anything could more strikingly shew the divine authority of the word, the

peace and blessing connected with subjection to it, and the evil of departing from it. (Ex. xvi.)

The children of Israel, after the solemn covenant of the law, wherein they promised obedience to all the words which the LORD had said, almost immediately rebelled in making a golden calf, and worshipping and sacrificing to it, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Thus they brought upon themselves the just judgment of God in acting so contrary to His holy word. We are told, "There fell of the people that day about three thousand men." (Ex. xxxii.)

When Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, entered upon the solemn office of priesthood, they were cut off by instant death, because they offered strange fire, which Jehovah commanded them not. Jehovah said, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." (Lev. x.)

When the son of an Israelitish woman blasphemed the name of the Lord and cursed, God commanded that he should be put to death, and that all the congregation should certainly stone him. (Lev. xxiv.)

Those too, who were under the law of Moses were commanded to keep the sabbath day holy, and in it to do no manner of work. When a man therefore despised the word of the Lord, and was found gathering sticks upon the sabbath day, he

was stoned to death. The word of the LORD was “The man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.” (Num. xv.) Again, we find that a stubborn and rebellious son who did not obey his parents according to the commandment of the Lord, was also stoned with stones till he died. (Deut. xxi.) These are some of the instances of the sad results of despising the law of Moses—they died without mercy.

Saul lost the kingdom by rejecting the word of the LORD. He was commanded by the LORD of hosts to utterly destroy and spare not Amalek, man and woman, infant and sucking, ox and sheep, camel and ass. Instead of this he spared the king of the Amalekites, Agag, the best of the sheep and oxen, the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. Saul might have thought he was doing a good thing in reserving some of the sheep and oxen for sacrifices; but it was contrary to the word of the Lord. Therefore Samuel said, “Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.” (1 Sam. xv.)

CORRESPONDENCE.

40. "V.," Burgess Hill. Received your kind letter, and poetry enclosed, with thanks.

41. "H.," Tottenham. It certainly shews that a Christian must be in a sad state of soul—if a Christian at all—who "prefers the world's company to the saints." We can hardly conceive that one who is really born of God would *prefer* to live as a servant with unconverted people. No doubt some christian masters and mistresses are exacting, and not quite as considerate as they should be. On the other hand, christian servants often take great liberties, *because* those over them are in the Lord, and have a gracious and christian-like bearing toward them. We have visited no small number of the households of christian people, and the blessing and comfort we have sometimes known, when the servants and those over them are able, in a godly manner, to keep their places according to the word of God, and thus all serve Christ, have been most marked and striking. There is, however, an important point on this subject never to be lost sight of. It is not enough for a person to be converted in order to be happy as a servant; such must be fitted for the work they undertake, or they will not be in the place God has assigned to them. About this, christian servants should be much exercised before the Lord. Another cause of much failure in these days is that many set up in business without sufficient capital, who are manifestly in other respects unfitted to be masters, instead of keeping in the place of servants to which God has called them. About these, and many other points, both servants and masters should be much in prayer to

God, and exercised in conscience before Him over His word. If we are not in the place God has marked out for us, how can we be happy, or expect His blessing? It is a day of practical unrighteousness in many respects, and we know nothing more loudly calling for thorough self-examination and self-judgment than how we conduct ourselves in household matters, whether we be servants, masters, or mistresses. Perhaps there is no greater hindrance to blessing and testimony to the name of our Lord than unseemly conduct at home. May the Lord awaken souls to a sense of obligation to Him, who loved us, and gave Himself for us, about these things.

42. "E.," Liversedge. We know nothing in scripture about "restored apostles." The apostles were the foundation-stones of the church of God. Hence we read the saints "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." (Eph. ii. 20.) And in accordance with this truth, the vision John had of the church as the bride, the Lamb's wife, agrees. "The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (Rev. xxi. 14.) The foundation is always the beginning of a building, and not to be brought in after the work of building has been going on for eighteen hundred years.

The "sealing" now is not the work of a man, but of God. "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise;" and when the gift of the Holy Ghost to indwell us is spoken of elsewhere, it is said, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Eph. i. 13; Gal. iv. 6.)

43. "L.," Shorncliffe. There is an error in answer 34. It should have been that the man revived, not the prophet, in the reference to 2 Kings xii. 21.

44. "B.," Penzance. A child of God is restored to the Lord's table because he is restored to the Lord. To be "put away" in the name of the Lord Jesus, by even two or three gathered together in His name, is most serious ; for concerning such our Lord said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven." We believe that self-examination, self-judgment, self-loathing will be the true path of restoration ; and also there will be full confession to the Lord, and the consciousness of His forgiveness, before such could have liberty before Him to be at His table. When the matter has thus been cleared up between the offender's own soul and the Lord, and then cleared up with His saints who were painfully concerned in putting away, they will gladly forgive such and thankfully own him as eligible for communion at the Lord's table. Unless brethren had evidence of his restoration of soul to the Lord, how could they receive him back ?

45. "D.," Gravesend. We are most happy to reply to your interesting letter, for we believe many are in the state of soul you describe ; they confound the operations of the Spirit *in* them with the work of Christ *for* them. When it is a question in scripture of our peace with God, the answer is always founded on the work of Christ—"having made peace through the blood of his cross." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." It therefore is known in no other way than on the principle of faith—"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through

our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 1.) This is why, in the Epistle to the Romans, there is scarcely any allusion to the operations of the Holy Spirit, until the ground of being reckoned righteous, justification in the sight of God, peace with God, and being dead unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ, and much more, are fully cleared up. When, in chapter viii., the soul is established in the blessed truth, that, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," then the life-giving, indwelling, and various operations of the Spirit of God are largely dwelt on. No doubt these who are born of God will hate sin, be sorry for their sins, and will judge themselves both by nature and in practice, to be unclean, undone, and very dishonouring to God. But the alone ground of peace is the sacrifice of Christ : as you say, By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are set apart for Him. The work of redemption has been done. Sins have been judged on the cross ; and all are now perfectly forgiven through faith, (not through feeling this or that), in our Lord Jesus Christ. "By him all that believe are justified from all things." May you rest in this precious declaration of divine truth ; and, being justified, and having the Holy Ghost dwelling in you because you are God's child, may you learn more and more of His gracious operations, and of the reality of His teaching, guidance, and comfort !

46. "Bristol." Your question about singing hymns is very serious. It needs spiritual discernment, continual watching, and exercise of soul, to have the consciousness that what we are doing is pleasing to God. We hope to refer to this again, if the Lord will.

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LYDIA;
OR,
THE BEGINNING OF THE WORK OF GOD IN
EUROPE.

To the traveller there is something peculiarly interesting in tracing a river, hundreds of miles from the ocean, to its source. There arrived, he would sit down, and examine all the surroundings of the little stream that gushes out of the mountain side. Still more interesting must it be to the Christian to trace the vast stream of Christianity in Europe for so many hundreds of years; and at last arrive at this little stream of blessing, that first burst forth so silently by the river-side at Philippi.

Before, however, we look at Lydia, the woman at the river-side, we will look briefly at three other women in other scenes. If we trace the great rolling river of this world's history of sin, sorrow, and death, where shall we find the fountain-head of that deep, black stream? Again, there is a woman by the river. But look at Eve in the midst of the garden of Paradise; how different from the seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, as she sat at the river of Philippi!

Surely that river, that flowed in its four streams from the garden of Eden, was a type in contrast, for, as it flowed from the hand of God, all was good. But the serpent entered that fair scene; the woman believed his lie, and disbelieved God.

She listened, and believed the insinuation that God was so unkind as to withhold the fruit of one tree, that He refused to allow them what would be for their good. There was the first bubbling up of that dreadful stream of iniquity which has overflowed the world. And no man has found, or can find any other spring-head of evil. What a change took place in that garden of innocent delight! She was first in the transgression, and soon she led Adam to disobey God. Very sad is the history. Now in righteousness they must be driven out from the garden, and from the tree of life. Yet grace shall reign through righteousness, and, from the woman's Seed, the Deliverer come who shall bruise the serpent's head.

We pass on to other days. Four thousand years has that river of sin and death rolled on, and the woman's Seed has come. The Eternal Son, the Word, is now made flesh ; and truly Man, being weary with His journey, Jesus sat at Jacob's well. God manifest. A woman comes to the well—a daughter of Eve, whose nature and practice is sin. What a study ! Will Jehovah-Jesus drive her from His presence ? No, He came to seek and to save the lost. Does He say, God is so unkind as to keep back what would do you good ? Hearken to His words: "If thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink ; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." (John iv. 10.) Do

you believe this, that God is ready to meet you just as you are, and to give you the water of life? How interesting is the revelation of God to the woman at the well! What a new fountain, a well of water, springing up into everlasting life! And what a fact, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." This she could not understand until her conscience was reached. He who was going up to the cross to bear her sins could say, "Go, call thy husband." He did not impute her sin to her, and drive her from His presence. No; soon He would reach the dreadful hour when her sins would be imputed, yea, laid upon Him. Thus He could reveal the Father, seeking such to worship Him in spirit and in truth. The felt need is now created in her soul that nothing can satisfy but Himself. In the fulness of divine grace, He now says unto her, "I that speak unto thee am he." Ah, when Christ is revealed to the soul of a poor sinner, earthly things are readily left behind. She left her water-pot: and as a woman was first in the transgression, so now a woman is the first messenger of the Messiah to the men of Samaria. Has our reader ever been thus face to face with the Son of God?

We must now pass on to another woman, in another garden. There is Mary weeping by an empty sepulchre. (John xx.) He who sat at Jacob's well has now been nailed to the cross, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our

iniquities. And, far more than this, God has been glorified by that death on the cross. Neither men, enemies, nor disciples, understood that vast work accomplished on that cross. God understood it; God had raised Him as man from among the dead. The empty sepulchre, though a sorrow to Mary, was the triumph of God over Satan. Satan had represented God as too unkind to give an apple for man's good. God had so loved as to give His beloved Son to bear our sins in His own body on the tree. There was the woman in the garden. "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou?" As yet she had no idea of the risen Lord. She only thought of taking His dead body away. "Jesus said unto her, Mary." What a moment! She turned, and saw her Rabboni—Master. And now the woman out of whom He had cast seven devils (oh, the riches of His grace!) is to be the first messenger of the new creation. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Yes, if woman was first in the transgression, woman is first to announce the glad tidings of the new creation—that the disciples were now the brethren of the risen Christ. As First-born from the dead, He was not ashamed to call them brethren. God was now and for ever their Father and their God, even as He was the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That very evening of the first day of the week did Jesus Him-

self stand in their midst, and say unto them, “ Peace unto you.” Do you know this same Jesus alive from the dead? Have you heard and believed these three words, “ Peace unto you”? Look into the one garden—there stood the woman and Satan. Look into this garden—there stands the woman and Jesus. What a contrast! We now pass on to Lydia, the woman by the river at Philippi.

As this is the beginning of the church of God in Europe : the conversion of the first Christian, the first member of the one body of Christ, in Europe : and also the first bubble of that stream which has flowed for eighteen hundred years through all the changes of Europe ; surely every circumstance connected with this first day’s work demands our careful attention. Indeed the whole chapter (Acts xvi.) seems to throw light on the history of the church of God in Europe, from that day to this. We would notice that the chapter opens with the introduction of Timothy, who henceforth takes the place of Barnabas. And who can tell the vast importance of the Epistles to Timothy? The first epistle, as to the middle ages so called, or the *latter times* (1 Tim. iv. 1) ; and the second epistle as divine guidance for these *last days*. (2 Tim. ii. 19-22 ; iii. 1.)

The next thing is the entire dependence of even the apostle Paul on the guidance of the Holy Ghost, as to *where* and *when* he was to preach or teach the word. So far was even Paul, the apostle,

from being able to ordain where any man should be a preacher of the word. Elders he could ordain, to rule or take charge of the assembly where they were located; or deacons, for the temporal needs of the saints: or, as an apostle, he could delegate another to do so. But we notice here, and everywhere, he did not know where to preach Christ himself, except as guided by, and in entire dependence on, the Holy Ghost. What a lesson is this for the ministers of Christ in Europe! Paul is in Galatia. "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they, passing by Mysia, came down to Troas." Now does not the Lord guide His servants, from Galatia to Philippi, some three hundred miles? What a journey in those days. What beautiful dependence on the Holy Ghost; city after city is passed for three hundred miles. He sails from Troas, passes what we call the Bosphorus, enters Europe, arrives at last at Philippi. If the apostle was thus dependent on the Spirit as to where and when to preach, ought not we? We talk of apostolic succession; but where is it? Where, we ask, are the servants of Christ in this day who would not only not dare to appoint where others are to preach the word, but, as to themselves, tread in the steps of an apostle who travelled some

three hundred miles, in lowly dependence on the Spirit of God, as to where he should preach? Mark, he did not do his *own will*, he "assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered him not."

What an introduction this is to the first day's work in Europe! Let us be honest. Is it not a lesson we have well-nigh forgotten? What have we lost by forgetting, and displacing the Holy Ghost? Fellow-servants of Christ, let us test our own practice with this deeply important lesson. And this is not all, when we have guidance as to the town or city where the Lord would have us preach the word: how much of the human element comes in—what haste, or excitement, or effort! How different the apostle! He says, "We were in that city abiding certain days." What real dependence! What calm faith in God! Oh, that we did but know more of this.

Now, as this is the first time the word is preached in Europe, look at that scene. The Jews' sabbath-day comes round. They are wont to meet for prayer by the river-side. "And we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." Now we will look at the first convert in Europe. "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her

household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." Thus there was first the sovereign guidance of the Spirit as to the city, and the place, the river-side. And then the work in the heart was the Lord's. The result is, that she attended to the things that were spoken of Paul. She and her household immediately are baptized, and thus take the place of professed Christians. Not only so, but fruit appears. She does not say, If ye have judged me to be true to you, but faithful to the Lord. We could tell of many such instances of sovereign grace in our day. But, reader, is this a picture of your case? Has the Lord opened your heart to attend to the things spoken or written by Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Have you taken the profession of being a Christian? Can those who know you judge by your ways that you are faithful to the Lord? Is it the language of your heart, Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?

What a picture is that woman by the river, of the beginning of God's stream of blessing to poor, dark Europe! It is worthy of our closest study. It seems to mark what is of God from the beginning of His work to the end.

When we saw the first woman by the river in Eden, the serpent immediately entered the scene, and by sin poisoned the stream of humanity at its

very source. Is it not so again? No sooner had the work of God begun in Europe, but Satan sought to corrupt it. And what did the crafty enemy think was the best way to poison the stream of Christianity in Europe? His long experience told him the best way to corrupt it was to join himself as the serpent to it. There was a celebrated agent of the serpent, a certain damsel, possessed of a spirit of divination, or PYTHON (the serpent). Amongst the heathen, however educated, these persons possessed of the devil were oracles, and had immense influence. Vast sums, and costly gifts, were sometimes given to them by those who came to consult them. The serpent is thus again seeking to corrupt the stream at its head. "The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days."

But the god of this world was baffled in this case. In the name of the Lord Jesus, the apostle commanded the demon to come out of her. What a mercy Paul knew him; but this cost him something. If Satan cannot join the work, he will immediately try to stop it by persecution. Paul and Silas are beaten, at the command of those magistrates who ought to have defended them from the mob. They are thrust into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks. Does this stop the stream of blessing? Nay, the

ill-treated servants of the Lord sing praises at midnight, and the very jailer is converted. What light this chapter throws on the history of the river, the stream of blessing of the church of God, and His work in Europe! Satan's plan has ever been, first to join himself to that work, through or by persons of influence in this world; and where he cannot do this, to persecute it with fury.

How marvellous the effect where God is working, whether in the case of a worshipping Lydia, or a desperate heathen jailer! At once and for ever they are brought to the Lord. In the case of the jailer during one night, and in Lydia's case in one day. Would it not be most interesting to inquire what really was the word of the Lord the apostle preached, which produced such immediate effects? This we propose to do, if the Lord will, in our next paper on "Lydia; or, the Beginning of the Work of God in Europe."

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.

No. III.

AMONG the many precious lessons which the death of the cross sets before us is the perfectness of Christ's *love to the Father*. He fully carried out the Father's will, glorified Him on the earth in a scene of unparalleled trial, temptation, and

rejection ; and in this He found delight. So unmoved was the purpose of His heart as to this, that, in the immediate prospect of the cross, He said, " Now is my soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? Father, save me from this hour : but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name !" And again, " That the world may know that I love the Father ; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." (John xii. 27, 28 ; xiv. 31.) There was *perfect obedience* in the face of the most terrible pressure of suffering and shame. He went straight on in obedience to the will of Him that sent Him. He surrendered Himself entirely to God. As to His words, He could say, " I have not spoken of myself ; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." In the face of everything hostile, and at all cost, with the loss of everything, even life itself, He was always the obedient One, so that He truly said, " I do always those things that please him." It is also said of Him, " Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." In such a world as this, and such a path, ending in such a death of ignominy, suffering, and judgment of sin, we see *perfect obedience*. (John xii. 49 ; viii. 29. Phil. ii. 8.)

His *faith too was perfect* ; for, though forsaken of God, not even heard when He cried, not having

the privileges of a common Israelite, but “a worm and no man,” He could still say, “*My God.*” From the first to the last of the path of dependence He was pleased to take, when He humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, He was the Beginner and Finisher of faith. Under the most trying circumstances of suffering, both of soul and body, forsaken by His own disciples, the Object of men’s scorn and hatred, and, more distressing than all to His loving heart, forsaken of His God, whom He had always pleased, still it was “*My God.*” What profoundly solemn lessons a glance at the perfect ways of Jesus, His entire self-surrender, whole-hearted subjection, perfect love to the Father, perfect obedience to His will, as well as His perfect faith, read to our souls!

Though He made intercession for the transgressors, yet He was not the less sensitive of their scorn and hatred; but about it all, He poured out His heart to God. Not a disdainful shake of the head but He keenly felt, not a word of mockery but fell painfully on His ear; but in the perfectness of faith He told all out to His God. “When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously.” (1 Pet. ii. 23.) Hence we find among the utterances of His heart when lifted up upon the tree, “All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they

shake the head." "Thou art my God from my mother's belly. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd for dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me, they pierced my hands and my feet they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (Ps. xxii. 7-18.) Thus He committed Himself in everything to God. Even the cup, though in drinking it, it might come through men's wicked hands, and Satan's bruising of His heel, He took from the Father's hand; for He said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And so all through the sorrows of the cross, and suffering of death, His faith, His obedience, His love, all was perfect. Surely He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps. Is it not well to ponder this scene so melting to our hearts, until we are so taken up with Himself now glorified, that we are constrained to live only to serve and honour Him in ways of love, obedience, and faith?

Before God all was perfect. By the death of

the cross, the atoning work was done. The Holy One having been made *sin* for us, and having suffered for *sins* all the demands of divine judgment, He was righteously raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God. So perfectly was the work done, that God could send glad-tidings to every creature to proclaim forgiveness of sins and justification from all things to every one that believeth on Him.

In the death of the cross, then, we see man's dreadful hatred to Christ, his enmity against God, and God's abundant grace to man. Sin is there beheld in all its dire malignity, meeting with the expression of God's perfect abhorrence of it in turning away from His perfect and well-beloved Son, because He was bearing our sins. The righteousness of God is there manifested, not in cutting off the sinner in his sins, but in pouring out the just judgment they deserved on His own spotless Son. The truth of God is established, and all done that the scriptures might be fulfilled. There God was glorified. His holiness, righteousness, love, truth, majesty, all are seen in the Cross in uncompromising excellence. Thus sins are purged, peace made, and man saved.

Jesus really died for our sins, according to the scriptures. This was necessary. Had He stopped a hair's breadth of actual death under the judgment of God for sin, no one could be saved. If He, the Corn of wheat, had not died, He must have

been alone. But He did die. He tasted death. Concerning the precious mystery of His death, we are told that He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, and that He was taken by wicked hands, crucified and slain. And yet He truly said, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down by myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." We also know that when He cried out in deepest sorrow on the tree, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He also could truly add "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Oh the matchless glory, and mystery of the death of the cross!

THE YOUNG BELIEVER'S DIFFICULTIES.

A DIALOGUE.

THE SUBSTANCE OF VARIOUS CONVERSATIONS.

No. II.

James. I am very glad to have another opportunity of speaking with you about those scriptures which have perplexed so many. Before we look at the question of sinning wilfully, I would just say, I have done as you wished in reading the whole of Hebrews vi., and the end of the chapter strongly confirms the view you gave me—that the falling away there was going back from Christianity

to the washings and sacrifices of the law, which, of course, have now lost all their efficacy, and can never restore to repentance. Would you say that the principle of *promise* and *oath* of God is also in contrast with Judaism, that is, the covenant of works as given at Sinai?"

John. Exactly so. For instance, in that covenant there were two parties, and Moses as mediator between them. God, on His part, engaged to bless them on condition of their obedience ; and they accepted the conditions, and engaged to obey. We know they utterly failed ; and so do all who attempt that principle of covenant. The blessing depended on the faithfulness of two parties—God and man. Man failed. Where it is the principle of promise, the blessing depends only on ONE. If you engage a servant, his wages are dependent on the faithfulness of two : you to pay them, and he to do the covenanted work. Now in this matter of our eternal salvation, God wished us to have absolute certainty, sure and stedfast. He therefore gave us two things, in which it was impossible for Him to lie—His promise and His oath. The promise and oath of God are both immutable. Nothing can disannul the promise of God. (See Gal. iii. 16–18, 19–22.) What a contrast this is to man under the covenant of law ! Our eternal salvation depends solely on the promise and oath of God. Yes, as with Abraham, the promise of Genesis xii. was confirmed when he received in

figure Isaac from the dead, in chapter xxii. So the promise is fulfilled to us in the actual death and resurrection of Jesus from the dead. What certainty! what "strong consolation!"

James. Yes; but that just brings us to the point: if our eternal salvation rests on the faithfulness of One, and that one God, who cannot lie, what, then, is the meaning of Hebrews x. 26-30? "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," &c. Can this possibly be the doom of one who is eternally saved, has eternal redemption?

John. You put the question strongly, but I am thankful for it. Better to look things fairly in the face. The question, then, again is this: if a true Christian should commit a sin, is there nothing but judgment and indignation for him? Solemn question, for then who could be saved? But then this would contradict the very context of the chapter. Would it not plunge all in despair?

James. I must confess, if this were so, I should be without hope: besides, such a thought would take away all the comfort of what goes before. And, may I ask, would it not deny the effect of the atonement, as stated in this very chapter? I should like to be a little clearer as to this—what

is it to have no more conscience of sins? (Heb. x. 2.)

John. It is to know that God has not a single sin to lay to my charge. If you met a person to whom you owed a large debt, and had no means of paying, you would be so troubled in conscience, you might want to turn up the first lane you could, so as to get out of his sight. The more you desired to pay it, the more troubled you would be. And if a friend had paid it, and you did not know it, you would still be troubled. It is thus common for an awakened conscience to flee away from God. How can I meet God against whom I have so sinned? Blessed, when the messenger of God meets the fleeing sinner at the other end of the lane, and says, Do you know that that very God from whom you are fleeing, sent His beloved Son to bear your sins on the cross; and, having purged them—put them from God's sight by His atoning death—God has now raised Him from the dead, and received Him to glory? What, says the awakened sinner, have my sins been put away by the one sacrifice of Christ? Yes, and God will remember them no more. What could never be done by all the sacrifices of the law, Jesus hath done by the one infinite sacrifice of Himself. Thus He hath done the will, the eternal purpose of God, and is for ever sat down. “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” You will notice, James, that all this is in reference to boldness or

liberty to enter the holiest—the holy presence of God in the heavens. As to this, all is done, all is complete.

James. How would you illustrate the contrast of this liberty by the one sacrifice of Christ, with the imperfection of the law?

John. Well, James, if you wanted a pass to travel from Derby to London, and you pay a certain price for a yearly pass, you present it to the guard, and he says, I must inform you that the way into this carriage is not yet made open for you: I cannot admit you yet, this ticket is only typical, a sort of promise of a better yet to come. Now, James, if you renewed this yearly pass year after year for fifteen years, and it never gave you a title to take your seat, it would not be very perfect, would it? The great day of atonement came round, for fifteen centuries, year by year, but never gave liberty to enter the holy presence of God. It was a typical promise, that pointed forwards. If a real friend of yours went to the Midland Company, and said, Cost what it will, I am come to purchase for my friend, not a yearly pass, but an everlasting pass. The pass is granted. The door is ever open, you have the perfect, continuous liberty to take your seat: no vail now to shut you out. Such was, and is, the love of Christ. He came to do the will of God. Yes, it was His will that we should have liberty to enter His holy presence without conscience of sins. And the

Holy Ghost bears witness that the will of God the Father has been done by the Eternal Son of God.

James. Oh, John, there is just one point here I should like to be clear about. Does having no more conscience of sins mean that after we are saved we never sin again, are never conscious of sin? It is all very clear at conversion, but if the evil nature should act, and there should be sins after, what about those future sins?

John. Ah, James, that one point is the point with many an anxious soul. When we are born again, that is, have a new nature wholly of God, and are in the light of His presence, the more we are there, the more conscious we are of failure and sin. In that very epistle where we are looked at as in the light, as He is in the light, both these things run together:—"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanse thus from all sin," and also, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

James. I wish I could see this clearly.

John. May the Holy Ghost enable every anxious believer to see this, for He says, "and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Does not this take in all our sins from birth to glory? It is not their sins up to conversion. If so, what could put those away since? There remaineth no

more sacrifice for sins. Has not the man Christ Jesus borne all our sins? Have they not been judged on the cross? Can God in righteousness ever impute one to us?

James. Then what must I do if I sin? Not that I want to sin, I long after holiness, for He is holy. I am sure I have at such a time lost communion of soul with God. What must I do? Have I *then* boldness or liberty to enter the holiest?

John. Certainly, you have boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus—indeed this is what you must do, come right into the presence of God your Father, and there confess your sins. Think, now, is not Jesus He who bore these sins on the cross, in the presence of God, and, for you, your Advocate with the Father? Is He not the propitiation for your sins—the mercy-seat? Is not the Father righteous or just to forgive? Never forget that He cannot impute or charge the sin on you. He can only forgive.

James. Oh, I see, He cannot impute the sin to one who has been purged by the blood of Jesus. Believing this, I have a purged conscience.

John. Very well; now we will look at our difficulty. What can be the wilful sin spoken of here—this trampling under foot the Son of God? It is compared to one despising Moses' law, to whom there was no mercy; and far sorcer judgment must be inflicted on those who commit this

sin. You will notice, as in chapter vi., the apostle spoke of those who had *tasted*, not those who had *drunk in*, the truth of Christ. So here, it is not those who had received the truth in the love of it, but those who "have received the knowledge of the truth." This is a very different matter. This would, no doubt, for a time sanctify, or separate them for a while, with the company or people separated by the one offering of Christ. There were the two things at that time going on, the temple worship, with all its sacrifices, which can never take away sins; and the gathering together as believers in Christ to worship in spirit and in truth. Some were evidently giving up thus assembling themselves together. Now, if it were unpardonable of old for any to *despise* Moses' law, what was it to *wilfully despise* Christ—to trample the Son of God underfoot as an apostate—to treat His blood as unholy? Having shewn the eternal efficacy of the one sacrifice of Christ, and that God had taken away, set aside, all the sacrifices of the law, had no pleasure in them, because they could not take away sins; he now simply declares that if any sinned wilfully, by rejecting Christ and His infinite sacrifice, there was no other sacrifice for sins: and to all who thus despised Christ, there was nothing to look for but certain fearful judgment.

Is not this so, James? Have you so *despised* Christ?

James. Oh dear no, I want to know Him more and more. Despise the one atoning sacrifice of Christ, and go back to the sacrifices of the law; or to the pretended sacrifices of modern priests; or to despise Him by denying His Deity as Son of God; or His atoning death? No, no; I never thought of so denying my Lord and my God. It is strange I ever had such difficulty in this scripture. It is plain enough. If there is only one infinite sacrifice for sins, to despise it, there can be no other, there can be no remission, there must be terrible, everlasting judgment. Dreadful words, no more sacrifice for sins! Through countless ages of eternity, no more sacrifice for sins—Jesus dies no more—no more sacrifice—no more remission! Surely I never thought how terrible it is to despise Christ. What infinite mercy to be able to say, “But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” (Ver. 37.)

John. We often find, by patient study of the word of God, that what at first sight seems to present a difficulty, when understood is full of richest blessing. Just think now what this chapter x. presents to faith. The atoning death of Christ is seen to be the very eternal will of God. This has been accomplished by the Son of God. The worshipper, therefore, once purged, has no more conscience of sins—for ever perfected by the one offering of Christ. The Holy Ghost bears witness.

to all this. Sins no more imputed, no more remembered, and we have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

James. What peace of conscience and heart this gives! The will of God. The work of Christ. The witness of the Holy Ghost. The three Persons of the Godhead engaged in bringing the poor sinner to God.

John. Well, James, have you any more difficulties? as we must part again for a time.

James. I am glad you are willing to continue these conversations. At our next meeting I should like you to explain this: a person in our parts asked me this question. He stated that the apostle said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." Now, said he, does not that *imply* at least that even Paul thought there was a possibility of his becoming a castaway, or reprobate? This seems to make many persons question that salvation is not eternal.

John. Well, James, if there really were such a scripture we must honestly admit it would imply the possibility of a true Christian becoming a castaway, or reprobate. In the meantime, will you look if you can find such a text. For the present, good-bye.



CORRESPONDENCE.

47. "L.," Whitby. Gifts of healing, and other sign gifts, seem to have had their place at the beginning of the church of God on earth as a special testimony to the unconverted. Concerning "tongues," we are told they were "for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not." (1 Cor. xiv. 22.) That God should answer the prayer of faith, and heal His sick children, remains true all through this time till the Lord comes. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick," &c. (James v. 14, 15.) We need not say that "gifts of healing" were very distinct from this.

That the saved will recognise each other in glory is clearly shewn by 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20. We should never allow ourselves to indulge in questions on what God has not revealed. *How* the disciples knew the two men who appeared with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration, we are not told.

48. "A Feeble One." You will find your question answered in last month's magazine, in a paper on "The Young Believer's Difficulties." We only add, that in the Jewish dispensation there was judgment for wilful sins, atonement and forgiveness for sins of ignorance. The epistle being addressed to Hebrews accounts for the use of such language. The wilful sin they were in danger of, was giving up Christ and His perfect work, and going back to Judaism; to whom there will be a "much sorer punishment" than was ever known under the law. (Heb. x. 26.)

In Luke xvii. 1, 2, we judge that the "little ones" are those who have believed unto salvation,

through grace. They may be young in years, or young in the faith.

49. "A Constant Reader." The new Jerusalem which came down from God out of heaven, and said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, is evidently a symbolic vision of the church of God—the bride, the Lamb's wife—during the millennial age. The "pure river of water of life" sets forth the abundant joy and blessing of those who are there. The saints will eat of the "fruit" of the tree of life (Christ), and "the leaves" will be for the healing of the nations; for during the millennium there will be nations on earth.

There is no doubt, from 2 Thess. ii. 4, and other scriptures, that the Jewish temple will be built on earth, which may be called Antichrist's temple. This will be after the Lord has taken up His saints, and before He comes in manifested glory to reign with His saints. There will be also another temple built, according to Ezekiel xl., which will be the millennial temple.

50. "W. B.," Pitlochry. Your question as to the scriptural ground, or principle, of gathering demands a much longer article than can be given in this short reply. If we go back to the days of our Lord, we hear Him thus speak: "For where two or three are gathered together in [or to] my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) This ground of gathering, gathered to the Lord Himself, remains true to the end. Yes, if but two or three. How much this is forgotten! Where it is understood, there will be the earnest desire to be found in a state suited to His presence, and to do that which is pleasing in His sight. It is certain, from the word, that it is His will that the children of God in this dispensation, or period,

should be gathered together in one. This was one thing for which He died. (John xi. 52.) It is also certain that this unity should be manifested, and for this He prayed, "that they ALL may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John xvii.)

It is further evident that when Jesus had glorified God by His death on the cross for us, and when God had raised Him from among the dead, and glorified Him, and the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven to abide with us—the divine representative of Christ on earth ; then the children of God were gathered together to the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus the church of God began on earth. Acts ii. : "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

From that day we see the church in the New Testament. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free," &c. (1 Cor. xii. 13.) "There is one body, and one Spirit. . . . One Lord." (Eph. iv. 4.) Such was the church of God, as formed by the Holy Ghost on earth.

All assemblies of Christians on earth formed the one undivided church of God. Such is the true church of God ; every Christian on earth united by the Holy Ghost to the Head, the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven. We have seen that the will of Christ is, that that unity should be manifested on earth. (John xvii.)

What is the response of the church on earth ? Where is the manifested church on earth in its unity ? Division, division, division. Three great divisions, containing more than fifty millions each —the Roman, Greek, and Protestant ! For any

one of these to talk of being catholic, is knowingly to deceive. None of the lesser sects, we suppose, would pretend to this.

Do we learn from the word why divisions are permitted, since they are condemned in the word so strongly? We do. "For there must be also heresies [schisms] among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." (1 Cor. xi. 19.) This is a scripture of vast importance to guide us, whether as to the general divided state of Christendom, or any particular division that may grieve the children of God. In the midst of all the sad Christ-dishonouring divisions of this our day, think of these words—"that *they* which are approved may be made manifest among you." This will surely be the case. The Lord will shew to such as are subject to His word, and only desire to please Him, who and where they are whom He approves. And thus they will have the unspeakable privilege, even in all the confusion of the last days, to "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Read carefully 2 Timothy ii. 19-22. It will be found that those who cause divisions never follow these. Thus, if we look to the Lord, He makes all plain and straight for our feet. Let us not look out for the bad, but for whom the Lord approves, and seek with them to call on the Lord out of a pure heart; at the same time, remembering in faith and charity and peace, that all Christians on earth form the one body of Christ, and are responsible to manifest this unity to the world.

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.

No. IV.

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him."
—Romans vi. 6.

Not only do we see sins suffered for under divine judgment in the death of Christ, but our "old man"—the nature that did the sins—is also seen there "crucified with him." What usually alarms an awakened conscience first, is the knowledge of sins committed; the consciousness of having done those things which are evil in God's sight. And it is usually after souls have known forgiveness of sins that they become aware of having a nature in which nothing good dwells; so that the cry of such is, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

Those who have tasted divine grace, and knew from the testimony of God's word that their sins are forgiven, desire to live without sinning, and are taught to hate every budding of evil within. Though they have been comforted by the assurance of forgiveness of sins, they are painfully conscious of self-will, pride, and lust stirring within them, and threatening to come out, if not, in unguarded moments, doing so. But even if it has not been manifest to others, they are painfully aware of unclean and unholy workings within; so that, at times, they are almost ready to fear whether they

flesh, condemned judicially the nature of his sin; there our old man has been crucified with him. Precious grace to us! Before God, we died with Christ, and then, God hath given to us eternal life; we read, "Ye are dead [or have died], but your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3). The one, therefore, who feels the sadness of bearing about such an evil nature, looks off of himself in simple faith, and finds deliverance wrought for him by the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus distress is turned into thanksgiving, as Paul says, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ for it." He has deliverance from the burden and on his soul of a corrupt and evil nature. He sees that his old man has been crucified with him; we say he sees it, for faith always sees things from God's stand-point; and he finds three necessarily result. 1st, That he has a new man which is born of God, which cannot sin, but abides the law of God; this he calls, "I myself;" he also carries about with him, as to fact, an evil and worthless nature, and incapable of improvement which he calls "the flesh." 2dly, He has made him by divine grace a new standing; the "old man" is so completely gone for faith in the judgment of the cross, a new position given him, life in the Spirit, so that he is spoken of as in the Spirit, or in Christ Jesus. 3rdly, His old Adam-standing is so far gone that the Holy Ghost says, "Ye are not in

the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." (See Rom. vii. 25 ; viii. 1-9.) This new standing is so constantly recognised in scripture, that many of the epistles are addressed to those who are "in Christ Jesus."

It is then by the death of the cross that we have *deliverance* from the nature which did the sins, as well as purgation of the sins themselves; because there in the person of the Son of God, the judgment of sin and sins was fully poured out, and the whole question for ever settled for the glory of God. Hence "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." The sacrifice offered being so perfect, and the work so completely finished, that nothing more will ever be done to atone for sin to God, or to remove guilt from the conscience of the sinner who believes; for God declares that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." It is well then to receive the divine testimony to the work of Jesus in the death of the cross, not only as to His having borne our sins, suffered for sins, and died for our sins as a sacrifice offered to God; but that also in His crucifixion our old man was crucified, and consequently, in His resurrection from the dead, we are associated in life with Him. We are told therefore, "In whom also ye are [or have been] circumcised with the circumcision made without hands in putting off the body of the flesh [not sins of] by the circumcision of Christ." Thus, as to standing our old man

is gone, so that we are not in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus ; and yet, as to fact, the "old man" is in us, and we are now enjoined to so judge of ourselves according to God, as to "reckon ourselves to be dead (or to have died) indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. vi. 11.)

It is because we have died with Christ, have been crucified with Him, that we are never told in scripture to crucify the flesh, or, to crucify ourselves, as is sometimes stated. We do read that "they that are Christ's *have* crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts" (Gal. v. 24) ; that is, they have accepted Christ crucified as their Substitute, they have put off the old man, and put on the new. But though we are never instructed in the word of God to crucify the flesh, yet, because "the flesh" is in us, we are not only enjoined to have no confidence in it, and to reckon ourselves to have died unto sin, but to mortify, or put to death every budding of evil from this evil source. Because "the flesh" is in us, we are told to "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." We are to "mortify [or put to death] our *members* which are upon the earth" such as vile passions, evil lusts, &c., and to "mortify [or put to death] the *deeds* of the body." Peter (putting it in another form) speaks of "laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies," &c. (See Col. iii. 5 ; Rom. viii. 13 ; 1 Pet. ii. 1.) It is well, then, whenever we look

back and remember the death of the cross, to accept thankfully all that God has revealed concerning the marvellous way in which “perfect love” met our need there, in judging and setting aside for ever the nature that did the sins as well as the sins themselves—the corrupt tree, as well as its corrupt fruit. It is when the soul has received Christ as his Saviour, he is entitled to know that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and death. There is liberty here. He is now set free from the *dominion* of sin as well as the *guilt* of it; he is in Christ Jesus. All is of divine grace.

Again, it is by the death of the cross that the links which tied us to the world are for ever snapped. The hatred to Christ manifested in His rejection, and its prevailing cry, “Not this man, but Barabbas,” have disclosed its real state of enmity against God. We cannot now love that great system of men’s and Satan’s building called “the world,” because men hated without a cause our best and dearest Friend ; yea, a friend that loveth at all times, and that sticketh closer than a brother. The more the child of God meditates on the Lord’s death, the more he enters into the righteous utterances of Jesus, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.” “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” What a world it must be to have cast out and cruelly and unjustly put to death the

sinner-loving Son of God, its rightful Prince, and to have gone on quietly crying “progress” and “advancement” ever since, with such a prince as Satan; for when Christ was wickedly rejected, Satan was rightly called “the prince of this world.” And not only in this view of “the world” in relation to the Saviour’s death do we realise that we cannot love that which has thus put such shameful ignominy, and cruel rejection and death on our precious Saviour, but still dwelling on the death of the cross, we are made to feel the awful truth, that it must also hate all those who have really identified themselves and their interests with Him. How can it be otherwise? While we boast therefore in the eternal redemption which He has accomplished for us at such a cost, we cannot but feel that, from the first moment we really took sides with Christ, we had new interests, new delights, and new prospects; and that the world, whether looked at politically, commercially, or religiously, died away from our hearts with the divinely-given view we had of “the death of the cross.” Is it any wonder then that one like Paul should have so solemnly exclaimed, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal. vi. 14.)

And further, it is also by the death of the cross that those who have been entangled by the law have died to it, and therefore been delivered from it.

Law has nothing to say to a dead man, but it has dominion over a man as long as he liveth. And however he may try to use it as he judges most agreeable or convenient to his own ideas, and call it a rule of life or anything else, it has nothing less to say to any transgressor than curse and death. Hence it is written that as many "as are of the works of the law, are under the curse." As the law then brings all who are of its works guilty of transgression, and under the curse, how can any be delivered from its just judgment? A man cannot be to Christ sometimes and to the law at others, for it would be like a woman having two husbands, and thus be an adulteress.. She must be delivered from the first by death, before she can really be in happy association with Christ the second husband. But the law does not die? This is most true. But you have died to it, and thus deliverance is wrought. In the death of the cross, such see that Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law being made a curse *for them*. In the death of Christ their Substitute they died, and thus are delivered from the law. As the apostle further saith, "I, through the law am dead [*have died*] to the law, that I might live unto God." The law is not dead, but the believer has died with Christ. And to return to the figure of two husbands, being thus freed from the first by death, we can now be married to another. Who is that? Christ risen, One who is on the other side of death, outside the region

of sin, or flesh, or law, or the world. Hence we are sweetly taught, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Rom. vii. 4.)

How strange that in the face of such plain scripture testimony that many should think that Christ came to help them to save themselves, instead of to save them Himself with such a great and eternal salvation! Many speak of making themselves better, instead of bowing to the divine verdict that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Others speak of the world's progress and improvement, as if it were gradually becoming fit for God, instead of owning the righteous testimony of Jesus of its being under sentence of judgment; while not a few are flattering themselves that they keep some parts at least of the law, and thus meriting something toward their everlasting security. May God deliver people from these soul-destroying delusions, and, being convicted of their utterly unclean, and thoroughly undone state, may they turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone Saviour of sinners, who has made peace through the blood of His cross, and casts out none who come to Him. O to know more of the infinite glory and everlasting value of the death of the cross!



THE YOUNG BELIEVER'S DIFFICULTIES.

A DIALOGUE.

THE SUBSTANCE OF VARIOUS CONVERSATIONS.

No. III.

John. Well, James, have you found such a scripture as the apostle saying, I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway, or reprobate ? As we said in our last conversation, such a scripture would clearly imply that even Paul might *become* a reprobate ; and this, of course, would shake to the foundation the truth of eternal salvation.

James. But is there not such a scripture in 1 Corinthians ix. 27 ? And, to tell you the truth, John, it is a scripture that has greatly troubled me, and thousands more. The possibility of a *Christian becoming* a castaway, or reprobate, as I am told the word really means, is no light matter.

John. Read it carefully ; and now, where is there a thought in it of a Christian becoming a reprobate ? It is, lest " I myself *should be*," not, *should become*, a reprobate.

James. I never noticed that before. Surely that makes a wide difference.

John. You will see this still more clearly, if you turn to another scripture written to this same assembly. " Since ye seek a proof of Christ

speaking in me. . . . Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. . . . Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be [not become] reprobates?" (2 Cor. xiii. 3-5.) This is the same word reprobates as is translated castaway in the other scripture. Thus, with the apostle, there were only two things before him: either Christ Jesus in you, or ye are reprobates. No thought of a Christian becoming a reprobate. He says, "But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates." Neither had he any personal uncertainty in the first epistle. (Chap. ix. 24-27.) It was the apostle's habit to say I, when he transferred the question to himself, as in 1 Corinthians iv. 6. What he shews is this: it will not do to trust to being a preacher to others. Just as he shews in chapter x. it will not do to trust to merely making a profession by baptism.

James. Then do we understand that a man may be a preacher to others, and yet *be a reprobate*, if there be no holiness of life, the fruit of faith?

John. No doubt that is the fact distinctly taught in the word, in more places than one. There are many such preachers—not a few—who are reprobates; Christ Jesus never was in them, as He says, He never knew them—men held in great estimation, and who seem to have done a great work for God, and yet are reprobates, and will perish everlastinglly. You know, James, if a preacher is a reprobate, he cannot *become* one.

James. I was going to say, this is dreadful to think on. Surely it is very heart-searching. It is enough to make everyone, preacher or not, say, Am I resting on myself and my doings, and all the while practising sin? or am I resting in Christ, and, by the power of the Holy Ghost, walking in holiness—keeping under my body? But does the scripture teach there are many such preachers?

John. Hearken to the very words of Christ: "Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. MANY will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I NEVER KNEW YOU: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. vii. 20-23.) And did you ever notice, a mark of a reprobate preacher, or one who takes the place of servant, but says in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken." Will not the Lord appoint him "his portion with the hypocrites? there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. xxiv. 48-51.) It is rarely a faithful word is spoken to preachers. But you see it is not a question of a true christian minister becoming a reprobate, but of "false teachers

among you" who are reprobates. Are there none in this day who say in their heart, My Lord delayeth His coming? Are there no preachers who smite with pen or tongue their fellow-servants, and who find their pleasure at the world's table? They may not be drunkards, but find their pleasure with the drunkards.

James. This is very solemn truth, it makes me tremble. Just think: a man to be a preacher to others, and yet a reprobate! And not to know it; be trusting to his supposed official character and popularity; and yet at last to hear those dreadful words, "I never knew you." It reminds me of Noah's carpenters, if he had any; what an awful thing, to be so near the ark, and yet shut out. In the ark, or out of it; in Christ, or out of Christ. But, John, you said something about false teachers. If I mistake not, that is in the very chapter I wanted to ask you about: yes, these words have been quoted to me to prove that the Christian has not eternal life, or eternal salvation, but that, after all, he may be lost—that the latter end with them is worse than the beginning. These verses are so often used to perplex souls, I should like to read them over with you. "For if, after THEY have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have

known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Pet. ii. 20-22.) Does not that really look as if a true Christian, one of Christ's sheep, to whom He gives eternal life, may, after all, be lost ? What do you say to this, John ?

John. Nay, it is not what I say, but what does it say ? Are they Christians at all that are spoken of ? Is a dog, or a washed sow, a sheep ? All depends on who the "*they*" are. "If, after *they* have escaped," &c. If we read the whole chapter, then we see clearly that the "*they*" are "false-teachers among you." What a picture of every feature of false teachers, from that day to this, in Christendom. Jude describes the same persons as natural men, not having the Spirit. One most distinct mark is that they mock and scoff at the coming of the Lord. They cannot bear it. (2 Pet. iii. 2-4.) "Scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming ?" This must be the case when a natural man, not having the Spirit, is educated for the christian ministry. The end is sure to be bad, one way or other. It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness. The difference between mere knowledge and saving faith is very important.

It does not say they had believed. There is not a line in this chapter describing the false teachers of Christendom that has not been fulfilled for these eighteen hundred years. Have you not noticed, James, that wherever the Spirit of God begins a work, the false teachers are sure to try to hinder it? But it would be most unjust to say this was also true of the faithful servants of Christ.

If you read a description of counterfeit, bad, false half-crowns, you would never dream that genuine ones were meant by the description. It might be difficult to tell them asunder, they might be electro-plate, but all would wear off in time. Just so the false teacher; he may be electro-plated with education, and the knowledge of Christianity, but in the end be like the dog, or the washed sow. How strange that godly souls should have been troubled with this chapter; there is not a word in it about them, except this, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

James. I see it is not, to use your figure, the good half-crown becoming a bad one.

John. Just so. Never is there such a thought in scripture as a child of God *becoming* a reprobate. Can your child cease to be your child? It may become very naughty. It may fail, and you may have to chastise it. Even in nature the relationship is unalterable. If, then, a Christian could

cease to be a Christian, the Spirit would never have used such a term expressive of unchanging relationship.

James. Certainly there is a great difference between a servant in a house, and a son.

John. Yes, it is the Lord who says, “and the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever.” Doubtless this applies primarily to Himself; but what saith the scripture to those who are born again, who are the children of God? Are they to fear that some day they may not be the children of God, but lost? No; “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Rom. viii. 15-17.)

Now, James, whilst a servant that is a professor, even a greatly admired teacher, may be a reprobate, and perish everlastingily, yet a child is a child for all that. Do you think, James, if a Christian, a child of God, could be lost, that God would use such language as this?—“ And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

(Gal. iv. 6, 7.) A servant abideth not in the house ; the Christian can no more be on that principle. Oh, the blessedness of that unchangeable relationship ! if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. If Satan and men tell you this is not true, will you believe them, or God ? If the Spirit of God dwell in you, you are a joint-heir with Christ. Wondrous unity ! He must cease to be Christ, if you can cease to be a Christian.

James. It seems almost too good to be true. That assurance of joint-heirship with Christ is so different from my past state of fear, and doubt, and uncertainty. I do not think, John, you can have any idea of the gloom such teaching as I have had produces. I do not wonder that many who are sincere lose their reason. I have been told I might be a happy, faithful Christian all my life, just about to enter heaven, fail at last—just at last—and go down to endless woe. Like a ship, they say, after having braved the storms of a long, long voyage, and heavily laden with merchandise, is just entering the port with streaming flags ; see, she strikes a rock as she enters the harbour. Down she goes, and every hand perishes in sight of home. Now, John, can a man be happy under such teaching as that ?

John. Happy ! I should say not. All well enough if applied to a mere deceived professor, a reprobate. But to teach the child of God such dark unbelief, must surely be the work of him

who long ago urged, "Yea, hath God said?" Will you read Ephesians i.? Has not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as truly blessed the believer now even with all spiritual blessings in the heavens in Christ, as he will be blest when he arrives in glory? Is he not "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory?" Does not that seal make the inheritance as sure as if we had it now? Think of this, James: joint-heirs with Him who is raised from the dead, "and set at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power," &c. Oh, think of that man Christ Jesus in the glory, Heir of all things, and that we are joint-heirs with Him! If He abideth ever, all the Son's joint-heirs abide for ever. Remember we have been reconciled unto God by His death. (Rom. v. 10.) So far from Paul having such a thought as that he might personally become a reprobate, he says, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. ; read vers. 28-39.)

James. That seems unanswerable; but they

say, Yes, but there is the rock at the harbour : if he should sin before he gets into heaven, he will be lost.

John. And the scripture says, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And again, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John i. 8 ; ii. 1, 2.) Oh, precious Advocate and mercy-seat ! I may fail, James, but He will never. I dare not trust myself one step of the way ; but my heart has perfect rest in Him. He who has sought His lost sheep, and placed it on His shoulder, will safely bring it home.

James. I am thankful there is no such thought as that of a true Christian *becoming* a reprobate in the word of God. If there had been, I should have been certain to become one. I hope now to rest in Christ. There is another scripture I should be most thankful to look at—it is this, "WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING." I can assure you, great numbers are troubled by these few words, and I do not know exactly how to answer them. They will have it, after all salvation depends on themselves.

John. We must close here, James, for the present. If the Lord will, we will take up that subject in our next conversation. In the mean time seek to keep your eye on Christ, and not on self.



THE SCRIPTURES.

No. 6.

When David set forth to bring up the ark of the Lord from Baal, of Judah, or Kirjath-jearim, because he did not follow the due order, according to the word of the Lord, it was attended with disastrous consequences—Uzzah was smitten and died, and instead of the ark being brought up to the city of David, they carried it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. But when David found from scripture that “None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites,” and thus acted, then they brought up the ark of God with great gladness and rejoicing. (2 Sam. vi. ; 1 Chron. xv.) Can any instance more strikingly shew God’s jealousy for the authority of His own word than this?

In tracing further the solemn way in which God dealt with those who despised the authority of His own word, whether written or spoken by His servants, we may notice His interference on account of the idolatry of His people. Because the children of Israel “served idols, whereof the LORD had said, ye shall not do this thing,” they would not hear His prophets, but hardened their necks, and rejected His statutes and His covenant, and “left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served

Baal. . . . Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. He removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria." (2 Kings xviii.) Where the ten tribes are, no one knows with certainty to this day; hence they are sometimes spoken of as the lost tribes. However, the scripture must be fulfilled that they will yet be gathered back to their own land according to the word of the prophet Ezekiel, and other servants of Jehovah.

Notwithstanding the solemn warning in God's removing these ten tribes out of His sight, because of their transgression, scarcely a century had elapsed, before the commandment of the Lord came to remove Judah also out of His sight, because of the sins of Manasseh. Besides, the Lord God sent to them by His messengers, rising up continually and carefully, but they mocked His messengers, despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, so that there was no remedy. "So the king of Babylon carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon, king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and

all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land." (2 Kings xxiv.) The king of the Chaldees also slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old men or him that stooped for age. The people were in captivity for seventy years, to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate, she kept sabbath, to fulfil three-score and ten years." (2 Chron. xxxvi.) What a solemn thing it is then to turn away from God, and not to hearken to His word! How offensive to Him to profess to be His people, and yet not obedient to His will according as He has caused to be written for our learning and comfort!

The cases in the Old Testament we have thus far looked at, have been for the most part shewing the dreadful consequences of despising the word of God. We will now turn to a few examples of God's remarkable blessing and honour on those who, in times of great darkness, have stood at all costs for the claims and divine authority of the scriptures. We shall always find whether in the times of the Judges, or of the Kings, even when they had for a long season been without the true God, that when they turned to the Lord God of Israel in their trouble, He was found of them.

(Judges ii. 16; iii. 9-15; iv. 3; 2 Chron. xv. 4.)

We are told that Jehoshaphat walked in the commandments of the LORD God of his father, and not after the doings of Israel. (2 Chron. xvii.) This was boldly standing against his own people for the authority of God, and His word. But more than this ; he taught the people by the Levites, who had the book of the law of the LORD with them ; and went about throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people. God was with Jehoshaphat therefore in a remarkable way, for “The fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.” So truly did he hold the authority of scripture that the king’s motto seems to have been, “Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established ; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.” (2 Chron. xvii., xx.)

When Hezekiah came to the throne he found that the doors of the temple had been shut up, the lamps put out, and neither incense burnt nor sacrifice offered according to the scriptures in the holy place, to the Lord God of Israel ; but filthiness was in the holy place. The people had forsaken the Lord, and turned their backs upon Him, burnt incense to other gods and made altars in every corner of Jerusalem. Sensible of these fearful evils, the king brought in the priests and the Levites, opened

the doors, cleansed the house, offered a sin offering, and made reconciliation with their blood upon *the* altar to make reconciliation for all Israel, and afterward utterly destroyed all the images and groves. This was according to the law of the Lord. Moreover, they found they had not kept the passover unto the Lord God of Israel for a long time in such sort *as it is written*. So the king sent to all Israel and Judah that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel. This was heartily responded to. "So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon [nearly three hundred years], the son of David, king of Israel, there had not been the like in Jerusalem." (2 Chron. xxix., xxx.)

Not many years had passed before the sin of Judah became again very great, helped on by the great wickedness of king Manasseh; so that when young Josiah came to the throne, carved images, molten images, groves and the altars of Baalim were very abundant in Judah. These the young king destroyed, and set to work to repair the house of the Lord. In it the priest found "a book of the law of the LORD" given by Moses. This book was read before the king. "And it came to pass when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes;" for he saw they were all justly exposed to God's wrath. So weighty was the authority of *the word* of God to the king's

soul that he read it to all the people great and small ; " and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord." Moreover, Josiah kept a passover. The children of Israel kept the passover, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. " And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet ; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present and the inhabitants of Jerusalem ; so great was the blessing and joy of those who thus acted on the word of God." (2 Chron. xxxiv., xxxv.)

From these few examples which we have thus far selected from the ancient scriptures, is it not clear that a divine revelation was recognised by the faithful from the time of Moses, as that which had proceeded out of the mouth of God ? Can we fail to notice when these sacred writings were despised, how markedly God's displeasure was manifested, and what misery the people had to undergo before any were awakened to their state, and they turned again to the living and true God ? On the other hand, when what God had said was hearkened to, and the people acted upon it, what remarkable blessing and comfort always followed ! Could there be then more striking proofs given of the scriptures of the Old Testament being a divine revelation ?

CORRESPONDENCE.

51. "G.," Plymouth. Nothing could be more decidedly stated in scripture than that those who are Christ's at His coming will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The inspired order of resurrection is thus given: "Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then the end." (1 Cor. xv. 23, 24.) The passages in the Old Testament to which you call our attention do not refer to this event, but to the future blessing of Israel, when those who have been "rebellious" will have gifts from Him who has ascended. This is why, when the apostle quotes from Psalm lxviii., in reference to the church, he omits the word "rebellious." Matthew xxvii. 52, 53 has nothing on the point, but simply states the fact that many bodies of the saints arose, came out of their graves, went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Further we are not told. When our Lord rose from among the dead, and ascended up on high, He led captivity captive. He thus triumphed over Satan, who had held many captive by his power. Even God's people were Satan's captives, and Christ led him captive. Thus Christ delivered the church from the power of Satan. What a deliverance!

52. "N.," Belfast. Christ Jesus is Son of man as the Seed of the woman, Seed of Abraham, David, &c., though eternally Son of God. Having lived on earth as Man for more than thirty years, and died for the ungodly, there is perfect fitness in His being appointed of the Father to execute judgment on sinners. We read, the Father "hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."

53. "D." Hereford. The epistles to the seven churches then existing in Asia are full of deepest interest to those who, seeing the peculiar character of the calling, standing, and hope of the church of God, are able to distinguish between the church as the body of Christ, divinely built, and always so seen in Christ by God ; and the church as a corporate and responsible witness in the earth. In this she has terribly failed.

The seven epistles give us not only the Lord's judgment of the present state of the then existing assemblies, and His suited presentation of Himself, and ministry to them, but present also to us an historical sketch of the gradual failure and decline of the church on earth. The word "mystery" of the seven golden candlesticks, assures us of there being more in the epistles than appears on the surface; and seven, a number used for completeness, being selected out of the many assemblies then on earth, bid us look out for a complete sketch of the subject in hand. As a matter of fact, the seven epistles give us seven phases which the church on earth would pass through. We have, therefore, in Ephesus declension—"Thou hast left thy first love." In Smyrna, persecution. In Pergamos, association with the world, as actually took place in the time of Constantine—dwelling where Satan's seat, or throne, is. In Thyatira, the woman Jezebel, who hated God's faithful ones, assuming divine authority to teach—popery. In Sardis, outward acknowledgment of the truth, but not in power—a name that thou livest and art dead—Protestantism. In Philadelphia, saints knowing the Lord as the Holy and the True, standing for His name and the authority of His word, though with little strength, and

assured that the Lord is coming quickly. Laodicea closes the church's history on earth with worldly prosperity, assumption, and indifferentism to Christ and His claims. This is so insipid to the Lord, that He will not own it as His witness on earth any longer, but spue it out of His mouth.

The difference you refer to, that the promise in some of the epistles is after "He that hath an ear," and in others before it, divides the seven epistles into three and four. In the time of the first three, there seems to have been the possibility of restoration; but when popery came in, all hope of the church being restored to its primitive state was at an end, so that some faithful ones are contemplated from that time, and the Lord's coming kept in view. The last four phases of the assembly on earth, therefore, continue to the end. This is why we see all around us Popery, Protestantism, some few here and there who cleave to the Lord alone, and Laodicean indifference. They go on till the end.

54. "W.," High Wycombe. It is remarkable, as you say, that our Lord and those who appeared with Him in glory—Moses and Elias—had each fasted forty days and forty nights; but we do not know that its import is given us in scripture. We believe that those men appeared on the scene, not merely to shew that Christ will have men associated with Him in glory, but because of their remarkable connection with Israel, for they represent the law and the prophets. The law was given by Moses, and when the people had departed from Jehovah, Elijah was raised up to testify the truth, and to shew by miracles, and the authority of God's word, Jehovah was God in Israel.

55. "N.," Port Royal, Jamaica. The interesting paper, when revised, will be better suited for a tract.

LYDIA:

OR,

THE BEGINNING OF THE WORK OF GOD IN EUROPE.

No. II.

In this deeply interesting chapter, which describes the beginning of the work of the Lord in Europe, we have not a full statement of the word of the Lord which Paul spoke to the first convert Lydia, or to the awakened jailor. At Thessalonica, the next place however, to which the Spirit guides these servants of the Lord, we have a sample of the manner of Paul's preaching. "And Paul as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." (Acts xvii. 2, 3.)

These are few words; but do they not speak a very different gospel from that which is now generally preached? We will inquire what this difference is, in what it consists. You will observe the effect of this gospel was also altogether different from the preaching of this day. It was then immediate salvation, known and enjoyed, as we shall find by the *first* inspired letters written to the church in Europe. Or, even in this chapter, was not Lydia fully blest the first day, and the jailor in

one night? Now weary years of uncertainty. (Acts xvi.)

One point of contrast is this. Paul preached *then* what Christ must needs do; while the preacher *now*, mostly preaches what man must need do. Just as if when God commanded Moses to lift up the brazen serpent, and it came to pass that whosoever looked at it lived: and, if instead of this, some one had declared the very opposite, and directed the bitten Israelite to look at his wound, and try to heal it. In one case there would have been immediate relief, in the other all the physicians in Israel could not save the bitten one from death. Jesus said "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, *even so must* the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Or, as we were saying the other night, to a number of colliers: Do you not see a difference between these two plans, or methods of escape, when you are deep down in the dark mine, and a death spreading explosion takes place. Let one man stand at the pit's mouth, and cry down a lecture of directions, what efforts you are to make to escape, you are to do your utmost to try to escape; a man might weary himself in the dark workings, or vainly try to climb the shaft. But, hark! the engineer, who well understands the nature of the mine, and its awful depth of darkness, what does he say? "The cage must needs go down

to the very bottom: and it must needs rise again to the very top, and bring the men out, or they are lost." The cage goes down, down, the men are brought up out. Yes, out of darkness and death, into life and light. Is there a collier but knows the engineer is right, and the other talking man at the pit's mouth is wrong? Now which of these methods of escape did Paul first preach in Europe? Did he stand at the pit's mouth and tell the sinner down in darkness, what he must do? Did he tell him to fast down there, and observe days, and penance, and rites, and ceremonies, and prayers; and get intercession of saints, and struggle in the darkness of sin and death, never, never to know, he was out, but only hope, the hope of despair, of weary years of darkness to be helped, if help can come of sacraments dispensed by men in deep darkness, like, and with themselves.

Does Paul open the scriptures and declare that thus must the sinner do, to get saved from the pit? No, Paul by the Spirit of God says, "CHRIST MUST NEEDS HAVE SUFFERED." Yes, for this He came down to this world of sin and darkness. All scripture declares that He must needs suffer. All types of scripture point to the atoning death. The Lamb of God must be killed, His blood must be shed. No other victim could meet the just judgment of God on our sins. As no deliverance was possible to the men in the pit,

but the cage descending to take them out, so no salvation was possible to sinners guilty before God, but the death of the eternal Son. He must be lifted up. Propitiation must be made, or mercy cannot be shewn. Ah, did ever any being descend so low as the Holy One of God? As man forsaken of God? See Him on that cross, bow His head and give up the ghost. See Him the Lord of all, yet laid in death; delivered for our offences. But this was not all. As the cage that was let down was also drawn up, or none that were in it could have been saved out of the pit; so Paul not only preached that Christ must needs have suffered, but also "AND RISEN AGAIN FROM THE DEAD." Yes, He who was delivered for our offences was also raised again from the dead for our justification.

The anxious reader, however, may be ready to say, But how am I to know that He suffered for me? that He bare my sins, was delivered for my offences? How can I be certain that I am justified—that God accounts, or reckons me, justified, righteous before Him?

As this was the manner of Paul's preaching—that is the shewing from scripture the need of the suffering and death of Christ, and His resurrection from the dead; and more, that all this had been done; yes, all that must be done had been done, "and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." Look up to

the right hand of the Majesty on high, who is He in all that glory? The very Jesus who has done all that was written in the scripture ; all that need be done, that must be done for your salvation. All is done, "It is finished." He said it. There can be no doubt as to this, for God hath raised Him from the dead, and received Him up into glory. Could there possibly be a greater proof that all that must be done, both to glorify God and expiate our sins, has been done than God has given in raising our Sin-bearer from the dead? So that the apostle in another place said, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe ARE justified from all things." (Acts xiii. 38, 39.) Now we may be quite sure, when God says by His servant, "Be it known" that what He says is true. God says, "Be it known." Yes, it, the very thing the anxious soul desires to know, forgiveness of sins. All that must be done, has been done by Jesus, and now God proclaims to you through Him forgiveness of sins. Do you believe Satan, or God? If you believe God, well, God says all that believe are justified from all things. Do you believe that Jesus must needs suffer; that nothing short of this could have purged your sins? Without shedding of blood there could be no remission. Do you believe that all this has been done; done once for all, for God has raised from the dead that once

bleeding Jesus forsaken on the cross? There God was glorified, and therefore now in righteousness He proclaims forgiveness of sins. Yes, blessed be God, He says, "BE IT KNOWN." Did you not say, how can I know? God says, all that believe *are* justified; that is, are accounted righteous before Him, therefore it is rather how can you not know? for what He says must be true. You believe God, and He says you are justified. How can you doubt?

We heard of the death of an eminent person, who had been a preacher many years. He said something like this: "I have sought to serve the Lord for many years, and yet I have not the comfort or assurance I desired in this my dying hour." One with him said, "You forget that Jesus Christ is the Saviour, and that He says, 'Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.'" He said, "I have read that a thousand times, and never before saw its meaning." He believed on the Lord Jesus, and Jesus said, he had everlasting life. The mistake was a very common one, trying to serve God in order to get life, instead of believing God, and thus knowing that he had eternal life. We think we hear you say, "I am a poor unworthy sinner, but I do believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But I wonder how I may get everlasting life and know it." Jesus says you *have* it. Well may you say, I never saw that before.

Equally certain are those other words of Jesus, words which have been blest to so many souls ; we cannot dwell on them too much. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.) Do you hear His word ? do you believe God that sent Him ? Then Jesus assures you, that you have everlasting life, shall not come into condemnation, but that you have passed from death unto life. Now why should you doubt Him ? Can anything be more certain than that which Jesus saith ? If you believe God that He sent Jesus to suffer the death of the cross for your sins ; that God hath raised Him from the dead for your justification ; you have everlasting life, you are justified from all things, and, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We do not hope to be justified, but being justified we have peace with God. Yes, and God says, "Be it known unto you," yes, to every believer God says, "Be it known." Be it known that your sins are forgiven : be it known that you are justified from all things : be it known that you have peace with God. Be it known that Jesus hath made peace by the blood of the cross—His own precious blood. Be it known to you, He says it, "peace unto you." "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his

name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

Such was the gospel preached at first by the apostles. However pleasing to man's unbelieving heart, to tell a lost sinner he must serve the Lord all his life, and so hope to attain to eternal life at last ; yet it is not the gospel Paul preached in Europe. It was the glad tidings that what must be done to vindicate the holy, righteous, Majesty of God, had been done by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And for our further comfort be it noticed, that this gospel, the word of the Lord that Paul was wont to preach, is shewn in his Epistle to the Romans, to be on the ground that we are not capable of serving the Lord, and keeping His law, in order to be saved ; but that sinners in this world, Jews or Gentiles, have been tried, and found utterly guilty and lost before God.

Since all are guilty, if God deals with us on the righteous principle of law, it is plain He must and can only condemn all. But now His righteousness is revealed on another entirely different principle : justifying freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. What is this principle, so entirely apart from law which only can condemn ? It is no less than the death of Jesus, the holy One of God made sin for us. The Sin-bearer bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. The Just One dying for the unjust, to bring us to God. That blessed Substitute

delivered for our offences, and raised again from the dead for our justification. And thus all for whom He died as Substitute are justified by Him, through Him, and in Him.

Fellow believers, is there any uncertainty about this? Has not God glorified Him, who was our Sin-bearer on the cross? "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Is there one sin, one of yours or ours, still left on Him, to be judged or expiated? How could He be in the glory with one of our sins left upon Him? Impossible! Then equally impossible that one should be left on us, for they were laid on Him.

No, the gospel that Paul first preached in Europe gave certainty, immediate certainty, whether to a worshipping Lydia, or a poor heathen jailor; and to all that believed in each of the cities where he first preached in Europe. How blessed for us in these last days to be able to go back to these divine certainties as first preached in Europe. The certainty based on the word of God of sins all forgiven, of our being justified from all things, of our having peace with God. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

In our next we hope to look at the effects of this gospel of certainty as seen in the first assemblies of God in Europe.



THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.

No. V.

"So must the Son of man be lifted up."—JOHN III. 14.

IN our former meditations on the death of the cross, we have seen that the believer is viewed by God as "dead with Christ"—dead to sin, crucified to the world, and dead to the law. The law is not dead, but, in the death of Christ, his Substitute, he is dead to it. He is thus, by the death of Christ, judicially cleared from the guilt of sin, and set free from the dominion of sin. In Christ risen, therefore, he is said to be not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, not of the world even as Christ was not of the world, and not under law, but under grace. The deliverance thus wrought for us through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is perfect and effectual, not only as to removing the burden of our sins, and therefore of guilt; but in rescuing us from this present evil age, and delivering us from the plague of an evil nature whose activities are always contrary to God. Precious deliverance!

It is, however, a point never to be overlooked when contemplating the death of the cross, that there sin is seen in all its exceeding sinfulness. In Eden we see something of the dreadful character of sin, or disobedience, not only in the consequences there enumerated, but in the holiness of God requiring that the man should be driven out of the garden, and not allowed to return. "So he

drove out the man ; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." (Gen. iii. 14-21.) Again, when six thousand years have well-nigh passed, and the working of sin, and the accumulation of experience, both in Satan and sinners during this long period, have grown into such colossal proportions, so that graveyards, lunatic asylums, hospitals, houses of correction, prisons, are increasingly called for to keep things outwardly bearable, we become almost lost in the immensity of the ravages and growth of sin. And further, if for a moment we take our stand as it were on the margin of the lake of fire, which is the second death, and think of the end of sinners, and of all such as have rejected the Saviour, and consider the eternal fulfilment of the words of divine testimony concerning those who will be there, we are led again to say, What a dreadful thing sin is ! For "the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone : which is the second death." (Rev. xxi. 8.)

But it is in the Saviour's groans, and agonies, forsaking, and blood-shedding in the death of the cross, we see what the exceeding sinfulness of sin really is. No creature could satisfy God's holy requirements concerning it. Neither Michael, nor

Gabriel, nor all the shining myriads of angelic hosts around the throne of heaven could make propitiation for the sins of the people. Were the vast universe which was brought into existence by the word of God laid aside, all could not clear man of one sin. Could it be that all of Adam's posterity could give themselves up to weeping and sorrow, still, as before God, it would be true that

“ All for sin could not atone
But the blood of Christ alone.”

No one but the only-begotten Son of God could make atonement for sin. For that, as He said, the Son of man *must* be lifted up, for He only could accomplish the work and so glorify God. Being man, perfect man, He only could be a fit substitute for man. Being sinless, He could be a fit sacrifice for the sinful; and being a divine Person as well as man, He was competent to meet all the just requirements of God, and satisfy God's righteousness and holiness about sin. If then man sinned, man also suffered for sins, and is the propitiation for sins. If by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. If man was driven out of the garden because of sin, the man Christ Jesus rose from the dead, and entered into heaven itself by His own blood. Who but Jesus, Son of the living God, could do this? How dreadful then sin must be, when we think that it needed One of eternal capacities, and almighty powers, as well as perfect man, to put it out of

God's sight. Though thousands of bulls and goats had been offered as sacrifices for sin, God had no pleasure in them; they served to typify the great sacrifice for sin which was coming, but could not righteously remove sin from the eye of God, "for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

It was in love to us, and for the glory of God, that He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all. Being delivered for our offences, we see in the death of the cross what the just judgment of sin is; that sin calls for nothing less than being forsaken, or abandoned by God. Hence we find that though Jesus was perfect in obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, yet He there cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The holiness of God, and the demands of righteous judgment of sin could be satisfied with nothing less, therefore it is added, "But thou art *holy*, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." (Ps. xxii. 1-3.) No person but God's own Son was competent to be a propitiation for sins, and nothing less than the death of the cross could justly put it away from the eye of God. Out of all this we know He rose triumphant. What a dreadful thing sin is!

How then can those escape being cast out from the presence of God into outer darkness, who refuse this great salvation, and die in their sins? How can they ever atone? In an eternity of un-

ending hopelessness, and boundless remorse, into which no ray of hope can ever come, what can exceed this unchanging misery? A guilty conscience ever accusing, the power of an offended God abiding on them, the darkness of banishment from happiness and light ever continuing, the torment of the remembrance of opportunities of having salvation presented to them in the gospel rejected by such as cherished the love and pleasures of sin, how unutterably painful; but how all the misery of the lost fails to give us an idea of the unfathomable pain and sorrow of "the death of the cross"! How endearing does the revelation of God's thoughts of that marvellous work make the Saviour to the hearts of those who believe in His name! What comfort of love flows into our souls when thus contemplating Him who was so willingly made sin for us! How small the greatest events of history look, when compared with the eternally-blessed work of "the death of the cross." If God had so to bruise and put to grief His own Son to atone for our sins, how can the sinner and ungodly escape the everlasting wrath of a holy and offended God? Happy those who now so know the reality of "the death of the cross" as to enable them to say

"Inscribed upon the cross we see
In shining letters, 'God is LOVE!'
The Lamb who died upon the tree,
Has brought us mercy from above."

THE YOUNG BELIEVER'S DIFFICULTIES.

No. IV.

James. I am thankful for another opportunity of conversing with you on such portions of the word as many feel difficult to understand. The scripture I named was this, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. ii. 12.) Many understand by this that they are by works of their own righteousness to finish, or complete their salvation. Some would say they were regenerated, or saved, by baptism, but that their final salvation has to be worked out by themselves. Others have some idea that they are justified by faith to start with; but still their final salvation depends on their own working it out some way themselves, and quote this scripture in proof. So that the difficulty is this—How can salvation be eternal, if it depends on our works of righteousness?

John. If we examine the context, the very opening of the epistle shews that the apostle could have had no such thought. He says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform [or finish] it until the day of Jesus Christ." It is said, too, in connection with these very words, "Wherefore [or so] my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and

trembling: for *it is God* which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

James. Then the apostle's confidence was in God, that He would finish the work in them unto the day of Jesus Christ.

John. Now, further, James. As you have heard these words explained, did it not look more like works of our own righteousness for salvation?

James. Well, that is what it comes to. I am saved by Christ so far, but never learnt how far; but my final salvation depends on my working it out to the end, so that I must keep the law for righteousness, and the day of judgment will decide whether I have done so.

John. But if on that ground, and if that can possibly be the meaning, we do not need to wait for the day of judgment. If we think we are working out our own salvation by works of law, we are surely condemned: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" and "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (Gal. iii. 10; v. 1-4.) "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." (Ver. 18.) Indeed, nowhere is this truth more forcibly brought out than in this very Epistle to the Philippians. This doctrine of salvation by works of law is the concision of which we are to beware. (Chap. iii. 2.) And Paul, looking back on

his whole religious life as a Jew, could say, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." But what does he say of all that system of works for salvation? He says, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Yea, he utterly renounces this plan of works for salvation, and counts them but dung, "that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Now mark, this not only expresses his then present state, but that at the very end he would not be found in, or having his own righteousness. He longs for the resurrection from among the dead, and then to be found in Him (Christ), the righteousness which is of God. Therefore Paul cannot possibly teach doctrine the very contrary of all this, as though Christ had saved us in a very limited sense, and we had to complete what He had begun by our own works of law for righteousness. Have I made it clear that he could not mean by "work out your own salvation," that we had not eternal salvation in Christ, but it must be by works done by ourselves?

James. You certainly have made it clear as to what it does not mean; indeed, I remember the apostle says elsewhere, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace."

And again, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” (Rom. iv. 5; xi. 6.) But, John, the question is, what do these words mean, “Work out your own salvation”? I am quite satisfied as to what they do not mean; for if a man could work out his own salvation before God, what need was there at all for the death and resurrection of Christ?

John. Quite true. We will, then, now look at what these words do mean. The Lord give us the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And, first, it is of importance to notice that these words are not addressed at all to an unconverted sinner, nor even to an individual saint or believer, but to an assembly. “To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops [or elders] and deacons.” Of course, as the assembly of God is composed of saved individuals in Christ, what is said to the assembly as a whole is said to each individual member, but still in the assembly character. Further, notice, the state of this assembly was such that the apostle could say, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you ALL, making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now.” Now, James, do you see that all this must first be settled in your soul before there is a word about working out your own salvation? Are you a saint in Christ Jesus? Remember, to

such there is no condemnation, and no separation. (Rom. viii.) All such are accepted in the Beloved. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. i. 3-8.) In Him they are complete, made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. For Christ is made unto them "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (Col. i. 12-14, ii. 10; 1 Cor. i. 30.) Thus, if we look at the saint as seen of God in Christ, his salvation is accomplished and eternal, He "having obtained eternal redemption for us." And all this fully proved to be without works in Romans iii., iv., v.; Galatians ii. 16. Nay, as many as are of the principle of works for salvation before God are under the curse.

Then, James, are you *in* Christ? And if you are, then Christ is in you. (Rom. viii. 1-9.) And this is the first statement, the foundation of all that follows. "To the saints in Christ Jesus." Mark, James, *to such there can be no uncertainty as to the final issue.* "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform [or finish] it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Ver. 6.)

You will find it will help to clear the meaning of this difficult text, that as justification before God is the subject in Romans i.-viii., and justification before men the subject of James; thus, the one by faith, the other by works (both

true and important, surely, in their place), and no contradiction, but in perfect harmony; so the subject of the believer's standing in Christ is the theme of Ephesians i., ii., iii. The saints, as seen of God in Christ, having eternal salvation, perfected for ever, as Hebrews x. So, in Philippians, the assembly is presented as seen amongst men, pressing through this wilderness-world to the glory yet to be revealed. So that, James, I do not well see how any believer can understand *this* working out their own salvation, until they have first seen what it is to be in Christ Jesus before God, and that this is secured unto the day of Christ. And, further, they must be on the same ground of the one assembly of God on earth amongst men.

James. I had never thought a word about all this.

John. I dare say; and as little have they thought who try to perplex you with this text. But are not these the facts? Was not this epistle written to such as were in Christ? and is it not chiefly occupied with the assembly's behaviour in this world? much as James and Peter teach works before men. What men see (James ii. 14-24), "ye see."

James. Why, John, already the epistle becomes quite new to me. What a pity it is to jumble the scriptures together, and thus lose their distinctive teaching!

John. We will now go on, only carefully notice the assembly character of the teaching. "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries. . . . For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Chap. i. 27-30.) I must say, James, I cannot see how Christians can work out these divine assembly principles, unless they are on the ground of the one assembly of God, in the unity of the Spirit. How could the company of a ship work out the orders of the captain in the spirit of unity, if they had left the one ship, and were flying their sails in boats of their own? I do assure you, James, these words are very precious and timely to all who desire to do the will of God. You see, James, it is the assembly of God on earth in the midst of many adversaries. Pursue it, and study every verse. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Has not Christendom sadly departed from all this? Yes, even to defend divisions the very opposite of this assembly truth.

Then, James, we have the Lord Himself, as seen as Man on this earth. "Who, being in the form

of God made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant," &c. In this world He took the lowest possible place. Now, is not the aim of the multitude in Christendom just the opposite of this? every one seeking to be a little higher in the world before men. The blessed Lord looked forward to the glory He should have, not in a world where Satan is the acknowledged prince, but with His Father.

"Wherefore [or so] my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Now, whether we look at the verses before or what comes after, it is plain this is not the question of the soul's salvation from sin, the eternal salvation wrought out by Christ; for sin is nowhere the question in this epistle, but the simple point is the difference between the presence and absence of the apostle in the assembly at Philippi. They had had his support in the midst of terrible opposition. He had laboured hard to save them as an assembly from adversaries. Now he was absent, a prisoner of Jesus Christ at Rome. They would now have to work out their own salvation, or deliverance from enemies without or within, with fear and trembling; not with high-mindedness and boasting. Christ was their example. And mark, he does not direct them to a

bishop in his absence; no, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is a salvation similar to that meant when Peter said, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." (Acts ii. 40.) Jude speaks of the same thing, not, however, to make them uncertain as to eternal salvation—no, but "to them that are sanctified by God the Father, AND PRESERVED IN CHRIST JESUS." Then follow directions how they are to behave in the sad circumstances of these last days.

James. Then how were the Philippians to work out their own salvation?

John. Read on, James. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life," &c. Are you satisfied, James?

James. It is altogether so new to me; would you mind having a little further conversation on this subject, and especially as to its present application to those who desire to be on the ground of the assembly of God?

John. It will give me pleasure to do so the next time we meet, if the Lord will.



CORRESPONDENCE.

56. "T.," Teignmouth. You may not be aware that the subject of your letter is one of no little controversy ; and we increasingly feel that the pages of our little serial cannot be open for the discussion of controversial subjects. This must particularly apply to subjects which are neither of vital nor fundamental importance. In your own case, all we suggest is, that you wait on God, and seek alone His guidance through the written word, in dependence on the Holy Ghost ; you may then expect to be led into the true path.

57. Kent. With regard to servants having their time employed by those over them on the Lord's day, we judge it to be a point of no little importance at the present time. We have sometimes been astonished at finding Christians justifying their absence from the Lord's table, time after time, by reason of their employers requiring their services ; and apparently with no exercise of conscience about it, though their principles shew that they give, in these instances, priority to the claims of their employers over the claims of our precious Lord Jesus. This is very sad, and can scarcely be too severely censured. It is diametrically opposed to scripture, which says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you." But worse than the class of cases we have alluded to, there are some who we hope are the Lord's people, who take situations which they know at the time must greatly, if not completely, debar them from the privilege of the Lord's day. This is to be deeply deplored for it is something like profane Esau, who, for or

morsel of meat, sold his birthright. On the other hand, there are times when, from peculiar circumstances, such as sickness in a family, accidents, and peculiar trials in business, feeding and tending cattle, and other matters connected with their responsible employments, they may occasionally be deprived of the privileges of christian fellowship and public ministrations on the Lord's day. In this, both masters and servants alike sometimes suffer. Of course, we are now thinking of exceptional cases.

With regard to the precise character of the occupation to which you refer, we have not sufficient facts before us to warrant our expressing a judgment. We are comforted, however, at finding there are some who are exercised before the Lord in these last days about these things. It is one of the many cases about which the individual must deal with God in secret. He only can give the seeking soul true wisdom and guidance. We consider there are few things which would detain a happy and faithful child of God from attendance at the Lord's table, and other spiritual occupations, on the Lord's day. A Christian must certainly be in a low condition of soul who could contentedly go on in such a course. We commend you to God, and to the word of His grace. He will assuredly guide you in waiting upon Him. We have long been persuaded that if those so occupied were in a healthy state of soul, walking in communion with the Lord, and, after prayer, that they kindly and respectfully expressed their difficulties of conscience to their employers, they would often find a door of deliverance opened to them. In these days of growing wilfulness, unrighteousness, and insubjection, christian servants have to watch

against the sad habit—alas, so common!—of getting all they can from their employers, without being conscientious in doing their work well, and with order and regularity. How can a servant be taking up his work heartily to the Lord when these points are manifestly absent?

58. “A. B.,” Dublin. We should no more think it consistent for a Christian, professing to be dead with Christ and risen with Him, “to be a subscriber and regular attendant at a fashionable club-house,” than to be a subscriber and regular attendant at a theatre. How deaf many have become to that word, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” (2 Cor. vi. 14.)

59. “H. C. B.,” Milton. You will find the apostle Paul received the gospel which he preached by the revelation of Jesus Christ. He did not receive it from man. Now what was received from the Lord must be infallible truth. (Gal. i. 11, 12.) This infallible truth he preached by the power of the Holy Ghost (1 Thess. i. 5); and believers received it as the infallible truth of God. (1 Thess. ii. 13.) Peter also speaks of “them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” (1 Pet. i. 12.) All this was according to the promise of the Lord—“He shall teach you all things.” “Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” (John xiv. 26; xvi. 13.) Now that which God giveth by the Holy Ghost, whether spoken or written, must be infallible truth.

Thus God was pleased to use the apostles, by the Spirit, as the foundation of the assembly. The assembly then had the infallible teaching of the Spirit, both in the preaching and inspired writings

of the apostles. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." (2 Tim. iii. 16.)

The possible scarcity of copies does not affect this at all. The church, or assembly, is neither the teacher, nor spoken of in scripture as the source of infallibility. Never do we read, Let him that hath an ear, hear what *the church saith*.

You ask, "Was it committed to the church?" Evidently the inspired scriptures, or writings, were sent to the whole assembly. (See 1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1; 1 Cor. i. 2.) Indeed, we only need to read the introduction to each Epistle, and it is plain these inspired writings were not sent to any select class in the assembly, but to and for all believers.

The Spirit of God, foreseeing the fearful declension of Christendom, gave also inspired instructions to the servants of the Lord during these last days, in 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Jude, and especially Revelation. Infinite is the wisdom of God, and perfect is His word. To it we are commended, and not to vain traditions of men. (Acts xx. 28-32.)

As to your last question, "Where was the church?" if we use the proper word, "assembly," the question would be very simple. In each place, Thessalonica, Corinth, &c., wherever there were believers, saints, brethren, children of God, there was the assembly; and with God there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. All believers then formed, and all believers now form, the one only church, or assembly, of God. All churches of man's making, whether national or dissenting, are utterly unknown in scripture.

60. "J. H. B." Southall. Your question is an important one. It is indeed most sad that so many

go on with what is contrary to the word of God, and do not even care to know what is the mind of the Lord. This is most marked as it regards the clear, distinct teaching of the word as to church, or rather assembly matters. We heard a professor say, the other day, "I have something else to do than to search the scriptures." We fear thousands would have to say the same dreadful thing, if they spoke the truth. What! so occupied with Satan's world as to have no time to obey the Lord in the blessed employment of searching His holy word: Is it so?

Surely it would be no excuse before an earthly judge to plead ignorance of right and wrong in the things of this world; of what avail, then, can it possibly be before the judgment-seat of Christ to say, I never searched the scriptures; I really never knew what was right or wrong in the walk of a Christian? How many such will (though even saved so as by fire) lose reward! (See 1 Cor. iii. 1-15.) May any such who may read these pages hear the Lord speak those words, "Wherefore Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." God hath been pleased to restore much truth as to the assembly of God, and every Christian is, doubtless, responsible to search the scriptures to see whether these things be so.

61. Y., Cunnock. Scripture says those who believe are born of God. No doubt it is by the grace of God that they have believed on the Son. (See John i. 12, 13; Eph. ii. 8, 9.) We must beware of reasoning in a carnal way on the truth. It is given to us to believe. Scripture plainly declares that "He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life."

THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.

No. VI.

"We had the sentence of death in ourselves."—2 Corinthians i. 9.

We are at this moment between the cross and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We look back and remember that He died for our sins, we look up and know Him as our life, we look forward and hope for His coming to receive us unto Himself. Christ is therefore our peace, our life, and our hope.

Though all truth must be practical, yet nothing perhaps is more eminently practical than the death of Christ, as revealed in scripture, in its variety of ways, from Genesis to Revelation. It is by the death of the cross that we have the knowledge of remission of sins, the comfort of a purged conscience, and peace with God ; and such consciousness of divine favour as enables us to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is reconciliation by the death of His Son which removes fear, and inspires us with confidence to live unto God. Being sanctified by the blood of Jesus, we are taught to walk through this scene as those who are set apart by God, and perfected for ever by that one offering. It is by the blood of Jesus we have liberty at all times to enter into the holiest, and to abide there, because He has entered into

heaven itself by His own blood. It is because our old man is crucified with Christ that we have deliverance from ourselves, and are set free from the dominion of sin, as well as from its guilt and power. This being so, how can it be otherwise than that we should have the sentence of death in ourselves? How can we put confidence in that which God has judicially set aside? Hence the apostle Paul, when alluding to a special trial connected with his ministerial experiences, speaks of being “pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust he will yet deliver us.” (2 Cor. i. 8-10.)

While doubtless the apostle is here referring to a particular trial in connection with his service in the gospel, yet the principle is the same as to every child of God, that, because he has been judicially set aside in the cross of Christ as to his first Adam standing, he cannot now put confidence in that which God has thus judged. Taught also by the Spirit of God that in him, that is in his flesh dwelleth no good thing, and accepting gladly in faith the judgment of God as crucified with Christ, how can he but have the sentence of death in himself? If we have believed God as to the reality of the truth that we have now no standing

before Him "in the flesh," but "in Christ Jesus," who is risen and ascended, how can we but have "the sentence of death in ourselves"? Thus, having died with Christ, and being alive in Him risen, how can we have confidence in that which has thus been judicially set aside by God in the death of the cross?

In this way we are delivered from self-confidence. This form of false reliance was the cause of Peter's denial of Christ. He meant well no doubt, and was sincere, when he said, "I will lay down my life for thy sake ;" but he did not know himself, he was trusting in himself, and had painfully to learn the folly of it, and its Christ-dishonouring result. It is perhaps one of the commonest causes of failure with us now. It is evident that some who have accepted the truth of being lost sinners, and have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, have not accepted a further truth that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God," and therefore that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ;" and thus they have not so learnt the death of the cross as to have the sentence of death in themselves, and therefore are not delivered from self-dependence and self-confidence. For the things of time and sense, no one questions the value of natural ability ; but "the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." To bring in, therefore, human competency, or self-confidence in divine things, is to deny the setting

aside of man in the flesh in the crucifixion of the Son of God, to get away from new creation ground as alive in Christ risen, and as havin gpower by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Though few believers have been called to pass through such trials as the apostle Paul, yet all children of God are entitled to say we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.

This lesson then of such deep practical moment, presented to us in the death of the cross, teaches us to have no confidence in the flesh, but to deny self, and confide in Another; and this too not only on great occasions, as we say, but as the constant rule of our lives. This has always been the way of faith, though not known so clearly and fully before the coming of the Holy Spirit consequent upon the accomplished redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. We read that Abraham "considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform." (Rom. iv. 19-21.) He relied upon the power of God, and not on himself. He judged God faithful who had promised; and therefore he was honoured of God. Again, when offering up Isaac, we are told that he reckoned

only on God, "accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead ; from whence also he received him in a figure." Whether then the path of a child of God be rough or smooth, painful or pleasant ; whether the matter in hand be great or small, his privilege is to connect God with all according to His word, and act in faith about all for His glory. By the death of the cross then we are taught that we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. The death and resurrection of Christ are thus to be constantly before our souls. In His death, we learn not only the divine estimate of our thorough good-for-nothingness as belonging to the first Adam, but we also see the manifestation of divine, perfect love ; for even when we were yet sinners Christ died for us. We see the depths of grace meeting us in our worst and lowest estate and loving us perfectly. Jesus said to the Father, " I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it ; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." (John xvii. 26.) Thus the love of the Father to the Son is the measure of His love to us. In the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from among the dead we see the greatness of His power which is to usward. The apostle prayed that the Ephesian saints might know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His

mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when “he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,” &c. (Eph. i. 19, 20.) Thus the two things to comfort our souls under all circumstances, are, that the Father’s love to us is perfect, that it cannot be more and never will be less, and that the power of God that works for us and in us is the power which raised Christ from among the dead. We cannot therefore be in circumstances beyond the circle of divine love, or where divine power cannot reach us. Having then the sentence of death in ourselves, only casts us upon that which is infinitely higher and better, even to trust in God who raiseth the dead.

It is then when studying the death of the cross, that we learn to have a proper estimate of ourselves and of other matters, according to the mind of God. There we see the history of the first man—man in the flesh—closed. It tells us that when *last of all* God sent His Son, saying, They will reverence my Son, men proved themselves to be so incorrigibly bad, that they said, “This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him.” But it also tells us of the abundings of divine grace in not only judicially setting aside the old man, and taking away sins, but also in Him risen and ascended giving us eternal life, creating us anew in Him, making

us to stand in Him in divine favour, and enabling us by the gift of the Holy Ghost to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The practical effect of "the death of the cross" seemed to have had constant power on the apostle. Hence we find him again saying, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (2 Cor. iv. 10.) If the sentence of death within, leading saints not to trust in themselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, characterised their *state*, their *testimony* was, that, while in a mortal body, and passing through this sin-stricken scene, they willingly took the place of rejection, by identifying themselves with Him whom the world despised, hated, and cruelly put to death. This they felt to be their true position, and this, not sometimes, but *always*—"always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus;" never forgetting that He was once here, but is not here now. Every day we have sorrowfully to feel that we are in a world where He was, and is not, and where He is still hated and despised. We may sometimes find a widow who makes us feel the sorrowful and lonely character of her path, without her alluding to it, for her ways and spirit shew that her heart constantly thinks of one who was her all, who was here, but is not now. We once heard of a son who could not return to the family mansion of the estate he inherited, because

his father had been murdered in it. But these illustrations fail to set forth the experience of those who are bearing about in their body the dying of Jesus. While one part of our testimony is waiting for God's Son from heaven with girded loins and trimmed lamps, and faithfully occupying the place of service till He come, it certainly must be founded, not only on the knowledge of accomplished redemption, but in the consciousness of being identified with Him whom men cast out and crucified.

This is the place, not for unfaithfully sharing the world's pleasures, but for bearing the dying of Jesus about in our body. In the glory we shall be with Him, and like Him, and be where there is no more sorrow nor death; not so here, where divine judgment is coming because men shewed hatred to Jesus for His love. It is this identification with Christ in rejection which is so sweet to Him, and which brings us into suffering, loss, and the place of reproach. Would that we knew it better. It may be a line of truth which is much lost sight of. When really adopted, it must lead us into a path of holy separation with Him. How can the death of Jesus, when known in power in our souls, lead us otherwise than in the path of identification with Him in His rejection? If He suffered "without the gate," how can the way of faith in this evil time be otherwise than going forth "unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach"? May He strengthen us for this!

THE SCRIPTURES.

No. 7.

THE books of Ezra and Nehemiah also set before us very strikingly, in many ways, the blessedness of returning to God, and acting obediently to His word in an evil time. Ezra, like others we have seen, not only sought the law of the Lord for himself to act on, but he spread the truth among others—"he taught Israel statutes and judgments." The priests and the Levites had their places, "as it is written in the law of Moses." They also kept the passover on the day it was ordered in the holy scriptures, and also the feast of unleavened bread seven days, as it was written, "*with joy; for the LORD had made them joyful.*" They also found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month. This the people acted on at once. They made themselves booths, and sat under the booths, for since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun, had not the children of Israel done so; and there was *very great gladness*. How encouraging to us are all these examples of the blessing which is always connected with obedience to His word !

We shall only call attention to another instance before closing our remarks on the blessing connected with obeying God's word, and the terrible

consequences of despising it. Jeremiah lived in a day when truth was trodden down in the streets, when the people had forsaken the Fountain of living waters, and had hewed unto themselves cisterns, broken cisterns which could hold no water. A sense of this gave the faithful prophet much suffering, yet he speaks of having much gladness and rejoicing. How was this? He says, "Thy words were found," it would seem they were so seldom heard that he had to search for them; and "I did eat them"—not merely look at them, and admire them, but receive them into his heart by faith; "and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Observe, they were not his own thoughts, or circumstances, but God's thoughts as revealed in His holy word. But there was another man who lived at the same time, not a man in poverty and seclusion, but in wealth and prominence; it was Jehoiakim, the king. We read that "the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winter-house in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet

they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them. But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them. Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD: thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah ; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire : and there were added besides unto them many like words." What a very solemn thing to reject the word of God ! How fully all these instances exemplify the words of Jehovah, "Them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." (Jer. xxxvi. 21-32 ; 1 Sam. ii. 30.)

How important it is to have in constant remembrance the fact that we have a revelation from God, and that "for ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." This alone is the authority for faith ; we receive the divine testimony, and set to our seal that God is true. The infallibility of the word of God stands, then, in widest contrast with the traditions and commandments of men. In the days of the prophets, as we have seen, the great point of controversy was whether God's word was to be believed and acted on, or not ; and, even to this day, as we may consider when we look at the New Testament, the point still is, whether man, either a rationalist, a ritualist, or an infidel, is to be believed, to the rejection of the divine authority of scripture. Before leaving our examination of the Old Testament, we shall hope to consider what is the great subject of its marvellous instruction.

LYDIA:

OR,

THE BEGINNING OF THE WORK OF GOD IN EUROPE.

No. III.

IN our last we saw the certainty of sins forgiven, being justified from all things, and having peace with God, which the gospel gives; and which the apostle preached in the beginning of the work of God in Europe.

We will now look at the effects produced by this certainty. This we shall learn from the epistles sent to the assemblies first gathered in Europe. The assembly of God. The first Epistle sent to the church in Europe, was to the second assembly formed or gathered, that is, to the "assembly of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ." These are the very saints who were converted by the preaching of Paul during three weeks, as we saw in our last paper. Not only, then, is this the first Epistle to the assembly of God in Europe, but if we compare the gospel tour of the apostle in Acts xvii., xviii. with 1 Thessalonians iii. 1, 2, it will be further evident that this Epistle was sent to them very shortly after their conversion; so that in this letter we see the immediate effects of the gospel as first preached in Europe. And it will be interesting to observe, that after so long a period, when another

which is not another gospel, has been preached ; God has been pleased in these very last days to restore the same gospel, and we trust in some little measure, the same effects have followed. May the Lord use this little paper to put the cry in our hearts, that those effects may abound yet more and more !

Such indeed were the effects, as stated in one verse, that we are not aware that the like is found ever after in scripture. “ We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers ; remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.” And this divine freshness characterised the whole assembly. The apostle could say, “ We give thanks to God always for you *all*, making mention of you in our prayers.” There was no uncertainty as to their relationship. “ Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”

What a wondrous effect then the true gospel of God had on these poor heathens ! There was no labour for salvation ; but the work of faith. They believed that Jesus must needs suffer, and rise again, and that Jesus is the Christ ; that the atoning work had been done by the now ascended Man in the glory. Yes, He who had borne their sins, they knew by faith in the glory : and thus the activities, the labour of love, flowed from faith in the risen Christ. Just the opposite of modern

effort, the endeavour by labour, and works to attain to Christ risen. By faith they saw Him who had accomplished redemption as their Substitute, now in glory; and all works flowed from this starting-point. Labour was thus enjoyed in the freshness of love: the full enjoyed love of Christ. This, no doubt, as it ever will, brought upon them great suffering and persecution: but it only produced further proof of true christian character—“patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father.” We will notice shortly that this *hope* is the chief theme of the first Epistle to the assembly in Europe.

We would, however, first call attention to the sad mistake made by many, that we cannot know with certainty that our sins are forgiven, and that we are the children of God.

Had the apostle any such uncertainty about all the believers in Thessalonica? If he had, how could he have said “*knowing*, brethren beloved, your election of God”? And did he not write this sentence by inspiration of God, as all else he wrote, as infallible truth? Nay, the gospel had come to them “not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, AND IN MUCH ASSURANCE.” Can there be uncertainty when the Holy Ghost gives much assurance? For one of these first Christians in Europe to have said, as many do now, “I hope I am saved,” would have been to say, I hope the Holy Ghost speaks truth.

And further, was there not the clearest certainty in the declaration of the Holy Ghost in the preaching of the gospel? “Be it known unto you that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” We say could anything be clearer or more certain to the believer, than this declaration of the Holy Ghost? Is the free pardon of Her Majesty the Queen to a poor prisoner more certain, than the free pardon of God to the sinner that believes Him? But more than this: the Holy Ghost had given, had inwardly wrought in their hearts, this much assurance. Has the same Holy Ghost given you this blessed rest of heart in God our Father, this much assurance? Thus to say a man cannot be sure he is saved now, shews entire ignorance of the glad tidings of God, and the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart.

Also, observe that the work of faith, and the activities of enjoyed love, made itself heard. “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.”

Here was a fact then that could not be denied. The preaching of the gospel of Christ for three weeks had given the certainty of salvation to these poor, dark heathens. They had become a bright

witness of the one true God in the midst of heathen darkness. This was known to many at the very time this letter was written. The blessed story of the cross had turned them “to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.” Has the gospel had this effect on our readers? Has it turned you to God from idols? Does your heart rest in Abba Father? Is it your delight to serve Him? If still unconverted, you have an idol; your life is spent on some earthly object. Of course no one could know your election of God. Neither do you know it yourself.

What then was that “patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father”? Is it not thus expressed, “And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead”? Now if we look carefully through these two Epistles, the first, probably written by Paul, we find no other hope but this, “to wait for his Son from heaven.” Indeed the apostle shews that he himself had no other hope, as he says, “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?” Here then is another undeniable fact: the gospel as first preached in Europe by the inspired apostle produced this patience of hope: this waiting for His Son from

heaven. Look at those dear young converts, the first converts in Europe; they are persecuted : they know they are in the sight of God their Father. What gives them such patience of hope ? What sustains them in such sore trial ? What are they looking for ? For what do they wait ? For whom do they look ? The Lord Jesus from heaven. The very Jesus who must needs have suffered on the cross ; the very Jesus whom God has raised from the dead for their justification, "even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." How very different all this was from looking for a day of wrath, and vainly praying—"In the day of judgment, good Lord, deliver us." He had delivered them from the wrath to come. Come it will, and there will be no deliverer then to those who have rejected Him now. All believers can say now, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son : in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col. i. 13.) Is it not terrible unbelief to pray to be delivered from wrath then ? It is like a condemned man saying, I will not receive pardon now : but I will pray that I may be pardoned when I stand on the scaffold. Not so with the assembly at Thessalonica. They waited for the very One who had delivered them from wrath : the very Jesus who had washed them from their sins in His own blood.

This hope gave patience in every trial: joy in every sorrow. It affected every motive of their hearts. It was the spring of love one to another. "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (Chap. iii. 13.) What a motive for holiness now; waiting to see the Lord Jesus: unblamable in holiness, before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is this your hope, your patience of hope?

Mark they did not hope to die, and go to heaven: no, death in many respects is a very sorrowful thing; though, for the one departing, it is better to depart, and be with Christ. But oh, what pangs of sorrow, often, for those left behind. Now did not the apostle put the coming of the Lord before them to comfort them in this very sorrow? "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." And what is this hope he puts before them, but the coming of the Lord? and that hope as sure as the fact that God hath raised Jesus from the dead. How gracious of the Lord to couple these two things together! "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Yes, the coming of Jesus is the one theme of hope, both as to those who are asleep and for those who are

alive. “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord;” can anything be more certain than the word of the Lord? “that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” Oh, what a hope, what an event! Think of that moment for which the word of the Lord teaches us to wait in patience. What a putting forth of divine power and love, all that sleep in Jesus shall rise first. Elsewhere we are taught, that as they have borne the image of the earthly, they will now bear the image of the heavenly. (1 Cor. xv. 49.) “Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Thus these first Christians in Europe were comforted, in the midst of the sorrows of death, by the coming of the Lord for whom they waited in patience.

Is it not remarkable that this true, primitive Christianity should have been almost lost for centuries, until within about these last fifty years? Instead of the blessed hope of seeing the Son from heaven, whom God raised from among the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come: have not Christians rather spoken of death itself as the coming of the Lord? And then the

terrible thought of rising to judgment ; instead of the joyful anticipation of awaking in the likeness and glory of Christ ! What a strange departure from the true gospel, the glad tidings of God. Is it not clear from this epistle that the coming of the Lord formed a most essential part of the gospel as first preached ? To take it away, or lose it, is to lose the very brightness and joy of the gospel : and by putting a general judgment in its place, is to substitute gloom and uncertainty for the joyful hope.

The first Christians then in Europe believed God, that they were delivered from the wrath to come ; that they were justified from all things ; that the blessed Jesus who had delivered them was coming again to receive them to Himself. It is thus plain they could, believing God, comfort one another, even in the midst of the sorrows of death's partings, with this joyful hope. They also knew perfectly well, that judgment would unexpectedly come on a rejecting world. " For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety ; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child ; and they shall not escape." And how much more on these subjects the apostle taught them during his short stay, may be seen by reading the second Epistle to the Thessalonians. This, however, was clearly understood by the first

Christians—perfect deliverance from coming wrath by the finished work of Christ; and waiting in patient hope for His coming to receive them to Himself. Then, after that, the terrible day of the Lord, as foretold in scripture. Where this distinction is not understood, or, through ignorance denied, it is evident there has been serious departure from the truth, as first made known by the Holy Ghost. May “the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And “the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”



A REMARK ON THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.

God has displayed His righteousness not only in the judgment of sin on the cross, but also in setting Jesus at His own right hand in glory. When He suffered for sins and died, it was for us; therefore, God must have us in glory with Him in divine righteousness. We shall be the continual witness in glory to the worth and eternal efficacy of what Christ has done. Christ would not have the fruit of the travail of His soul unless He had us there.

“And now a righteousness divine
Is all my glory, all my trust;
Nor will I fear, since that is mine,
While Jesus lives, and God is just.”

CORRESPONDENCE.

62. "C." Bridgewater. It is said that Simon "believed," but whether he believed because of seeing the miracles, as many did in the days of our Lord, we are not told (Acts viii. 13; John ii. 23); but from Peter's saying that his heart was not right with God, and that he was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," it seems likely to have been the case.

63. "R." Tetbury. No doubt, between the record given in John vii.—"Neither did his brethren believe on him"—and Acts i., a mighty work had been wrought in their souls by the Holy Ghost; for we there find "his brethren" in the upper room with the other disciples in prayer and supplication. Thanks for your kind note and the lines enclosed.

64. "W." Greenwich. It seems both unscriptural and irreverent for any one to subscribe himself as, "Yours in the Carpenter." It is in Christ risen we have life; in Christ ascended we are blessed, and united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent forth into our hearts. In the days of His flesh, He was spoken of by those who were offended at Him as the carpenter. They said, "Is not this the carpenter?" "Is not this the carpenter's son? . . . And they were offended in him." (Mark vi. 3; Matt. xiii. 55-57.) May the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, now glorified, be ever thought of by us with adoring reverence and worshipping hearts.

65. "T." Seaton. The "green tree," in Luke xxiii. 31, we judge, refers to Christ, who presented Himself to Israel in all His perfectness and grace, and the people hated Him without a cause, and put

Him to death. The question, "What shall be done in the dry?" is the solemn inquiry, What will God do to a people, fruitless and dead, who had so dis-honoured His name? It refers to the divine judgments coming upon an apostate people.

66. "C." Durham. There is no doubt but Elijah will actually be sent before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. If the Jewish nation had really received Jesus as their Messiah, John would have taken the place of Elijah; but they did not.

With regard to the curse on the ground, we do not read of its being removed, but Cain had a further curse: "It [the earth] shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength." (Gen. iii. 17; iv. 12.) In the garden, Adam had to dress it and to keep it; but when he sinned, the earth brought forth thorns and thistles, and he ate bread by the sweat of his face. After the flood, in virtue of the sacrifices offered, seed-time and harvest being promised seemed to imply an increase of facility in obtaining food out of the earth. The favoured people of Israel had to labour, but were blessed in so doing with increase. As a mark of divine favour, they prospered in their basket and store. In the millennium, while the earth will yield abundantly her increase, there will still be ploughing, sowing, reaping, &c.

67. "A Cornish Reader." Few subjects appear to us of more importance at the present time with the Lord's people than the question of debt. Notwithstanding the precepts of scripture so continually enjoin practical righteousness, and the word of God plainly commands us to "owe no man anything," yet it is by no means uncommon (we grieve to say) to find Christians, not

only habitually going into debt, but justifying themselves in so doing. Some, therefore, are found trading on other persons' capital instead of their own; others, using things daily which have not been paid for, and, in some instances, without a reasonable hope of their being paid for. In this way too many have usurped the place of masters who, we believe, are called of God to be journeymen, or servants; and many, in various ways, both in business and out of business, are keeping up positions, false and baseless, to the ultimate damage of others, perhaps, far more than themselves. Such things bring great dishonour on the name of the Lord. We do not doubt, however, that Christians, both in lending money and selling goods on credit, are sometimes to be blamed. Can it be true love and kindness to aid a Christian to keep up a false position, and to help him on in a course concerning which there can be no reasonable expectation but its ending in shame and dishonour on the name of the Lord? While we deeply feel, and often earnestly pray, for brethren in Christ who are pinched with poverty, (and perhaps few trials are more distressing), we cannot but deprecate the sad habit of rushing into debt to extricate themselves. If they made God our Father their refuge, pleading the name of His beloved Son, without self-will in the matter, watching His hand, and using diligently the means He has put in their power—we are assured they would not only have the joy of seeing His hand in delivering, but would find their faith enlarged by the trial.

The case you speak of, seems to us only a carnal stratagem to get rich. For those who have food and raiment not to be content, is in direct variance with one of the plainest scriptures. That in your

case it has not succeeded is the goodness of God. That it has not turned to the temporal ruin of the person, is because God is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. We must not, however, forget that it is written, that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.)

68. "Bridgewater." In order to understand the truth concerning "sons of God," in Genesis vi., to which your question refers, we must go back to chapter iv. There we see the roots and characteristics of two very distinct classes of people: first, Cain, who went out from the presence of Jehovah under His marked displeasure, and his descendants, who sought a name among men, and flourished as inventors, manufacturers, and musicians; and surrounded themselves with everything they imagined would make them happy apart from God. Secondly, in the days of Seth—another seed appointed instead of Abel—to whom was born Enos, a name signifying frail, mortal man, when, we are told, "THEN began men to call upon the name of Jehovah." Thus we have a people in felt weakness calling upon the name of Jehovah as entirely distinct from others in the world, who were outside the presence of Jehovah. Chapter v. gives us the genealogy of these God-fearing people. We have then, in the Antediluvians, those who were of the world, far from God, and without God, and a people belonging to God, and owning Jehovah in a time of departure from Him and forgetfulness of Him. In process of time, however, as chapter vi. shews, those who had been so distinguished as "sons of God," and callers on the name of Jehovah, lost their separate place and

character, and were attracted by the fair appearance of "the daughters of men," and in self-will "took them wives of all which they chose." Not only was this an unequal yoke, but God's only witnesses then on the earth, which had been so blessed of Him, lost their separate character, and therefore no longer had the place of testimony. Thus the first company of God's people on earth departed from Him. We know that "mighty men," and "men of renown," were the fruits of this unholy alliance, but what is that in God's account? Now all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth, and the Lord said, "My Spirit [the Spirit of Christ, see 1 Pet. iii. 18-20] shall not always [for ever] strive with man, for that he also is flesh, yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. . . . I will destroy." The Spirit of Christ in Noah preached to men then living in the earth, (whose spirits are now in prison), for an hundred and twenty years, and in due time the flood came, and destroyed all, save eight souls.

It is quite true that angels are sometimes in scripture called "sons of God" (Job xxxviii. 7), and that Adam is also called "son of God;" but in the chapter before us they were evidently God's people who witnessed for Him in the antediluvian world. Alas! what is man? What need have we to cry continually, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe!"

69. "V.," Hants. The point of such importance for the conscience, under all circumstances, is, whether we are in subjection to the will of God. To be "without natural affection" is condemned in scripture; but whether we allow the claims of those in natural relationship to be superior to the claims of the Lord, according to His revealed will

in His word, is of all importance. We are the Lord's. He knows our history and surroundings. The order of family obligations and of family relationships has been laid down by Him, and in those Epistles too, which set forth the highest truths revealed in scripture, and peculiarly instructive to the church of God—Ephesians and Colossians. To hold all the truth, according to the balance of the sanctuary, is the divine way.

70. Altringham. As we are taught that the principalities and powers in heavenly places now know by the church the manifold wisdom of God, it is not difficult to see the force of the apostle's allusion to angels in the passage you refer to—that a woman should "have power on her head because of the angels." (1 Cor. xi. 10.)

71. Galashiels. Much confusion has arisen from not distinguishing between gift and office. A gift is for "the body;" eldership is a qualification of the Holy Ghost for a local assembly. Saints truly gathered in the Lord's name, if cast upon Him, will prove Him sufficient for them, and nothing can go right without this. Putting away is an assembly act. The object of it is—1, To clear the Lord's name of the dishonour associated with it; 2, To purge out the leaven, or the whole assembly would be leavened; 3, That the offender may be set right. (1 Cor. v. 4-13.)

72. Peterhead. We believe that one who is walking by faith, and not by sight, will be subject to the word of God. He will receive it as out of the mouth of God, whether he understands it or not. He will hearken to it because God speaks. He will receive it in all simplicity as it stands in the inspired volume, in dependence on the Holy Ghost, the alone Teacher and Guide into all the truth.

LYDIA:

OR,

THE BEGINNING OF THE WORK OF GOD IN EUROPE.

No. IV.

THE PATIENCE OF HOPE, AND COMING JUDGMENTS.

WHAT a privilege it is to go back through all the confusion of error and human opinion, and, on the one hand, hear again the pure gospel as preached by the inspired apostles, and by it to see souls brought at once into the enjoyment of the full and everlasting favour of God, as we have seen a Lydia, a jailor, and the heathen of Thessalonica; and, on the other hand, it is equally important and interesting to trace *the effects* of this gospel on the hearts and lives of these first converts. Let us, then, now turn again to the first inspired epistles written to these young converts.

The first thing we notice, as indeed the first fact presented in the first letter written (1 Thess. i. 1), is this: all these young converts formed the assembly of the Thessalonians in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ. This, we learn elsewhere, is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. And though few understand this, yet it is as true now as it was then. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles.” This was of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Have we not sadly departed from the truth of

God? The apostle then gives thanks, as we have seen, for three other effects of the gospel—"your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." Now, though Christ had been preached to them, not works, for salvation, yet how abundant and precious to their Lord were these fruits! We have already noticed the immediate certainty of salvation in every case, in this beginning of the assembly of God in Europe. We would now especially call attention to that patience of hope, which occupies so much of both these epistles, in contrast with the day of the Lord. And as we do so, we would ask the reader to compare the effect of the gospel then with the state and thoughts of men in these last days.

In the very first days, then, of the assembly of God, these poor dark idolaters were "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." What a power was this to turn men in three weeks from all the antiquity, fashion, and grandeur of heathen worship! It was indeed testimony to the true and living God. "And to wait for his Son from heaven." This could not be to wait for the coming of the Spirit, for the Spirit had come some twenty years before. Here, then, is a fact; the whole church of God waiting for His Son from heaven. Is

it so now? If not so, men must have departed from the state and faith of the saints, as seen of God in the beginning. What a state! What a hope—waiting for the Son of God from heaven! It is further evident that a true servant of Jesus Christ then had no other *hope*. “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” (Chap. ii. 19.) What a motive for service, that unclouded moment, when the bride shall be presented glorious, without spot, to her Lord!

And mark, this hope was intimately connected with the yearning of the heart for holiness. “To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” (Chap. iii. 13.) Thus the coming of the Lord was inseparably connected with the gospel of God as first preached in Europe. And evidently, where the coming of the Lord is not taught, it is not the full gospel of the scriptures. Further, we find that as this hope constantly occupied their hearts, they *waited* for the Son from heaven. The apostle had no other hope concerning them; as the coming of the Lord was the crowning glory of the gospel, when they should be unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father. Other, and most important instruction concerning this absorbing subject is now given to them.

As we have seen, the coming of the Lord could not possibly mean the coming of the Spirit, neither could it possibly mean death, for the apostle now puts the coming of the Lord before them, to comfort them in the sorrows and circumstances of death. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (Chap. iv. 13.) Now plainly the coming of the Lord cannot mean death, for it is "them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

There are, then, two most distinct aspects of the coming of the Lord presented, both of immense moment to us in these last days, now "the night is far spent." Nothing can exceed the joy and blessedness of the one, or the terror and sudden destruction of the other.

The first aspect of the Lord's coming, indeed the very first thing to be expected, was thus revealed to the apostle. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep." Shall not prevent, or go before, them that are asleep. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall

rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Oh, what blessed facts are these revealed by the Lord to His servant, and to us ! Yes, how deeply they concern us who are alive and remain ! The Lord Himself shall come into the air. The dead in Christ shall rise first ; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. Could anything be more sure, more blessed, more comforting ? " Wherefore comfort one another with these words." These words may not agree with the opinions of vain men, but they do agree with the precious promise of Christ : " In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 2.) How sweet, then, with this full revelation, was the patience of hope of these first believers ! What ought it to be to us, so near the coming of the Lord ? How blessed thus to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereded us from the wrath to come ! Perfect purity, and eternal peace, will then be our happy portion ; we shall be for ever like and with the Lord.

But there is the other side, the other aspect, of

the coming of the Lord, as clearly brought out to these young converts. And this, though so young in the faith, they understood quite well. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when *they* shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them and they shall not escape." What a contrast this is to the coming of the Lord to take His saints. As the apostle says, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light," &c. This judgment and wrath on the rejecters of the truth is further described, in contrast with the saints who shall have entered their rest. "And to you who are troubled, rest with us: when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints," &c. (2 Thess. i. 7-10.)

The Lord Jesus had spoken very distinctly as to the sudden and unexpected manner of His coming in judgment on the living. He said, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the

clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not, until the flood came, and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt. xxiv.) You will notice that this entirely forbids the thought of the world's conversion by preaching the gospel. What was the state of the world when God destroyed it by the flood ? Spread out before the eye of God, what did He see ? "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark." "And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him : *and the Lord* shut him in." (Gen. vi., vii.) They had heard the preaching of Noah, and had rejected it. They are in prison now—that is, their spirits—waiting eternal judgment. Is the world any better now, since it has killed the Lord Jesus, and to this hour rejects the grace of God ? Have you found grace in His sight, as Noah found grace ? Have you come to

Jesus, the true and only Ark, as Noah and his house came to the ark? "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." To-morrow may be for ever too late. The Lord shut him in. Shut in, or shut out; which is it? As this year—nay, as the day of grace—fast comes to a close, where are you—in the ark, or outside? Certainly you are either with the happy, "we who are alive and remain," or with that poor deceived world, those who say, "Peace and safety." And mark, it is when they shall say so, sudden destruction cometh upon *them*. Sudden and as unexpected as the flood, men paying as little attention to the warning now as then. If a despiser of God's word should read this, let us remind you of one who said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" (Ex. v. 2.) The Lord hardened the heart of that proud and haughty despiser of His word. These young converts at Thessalonica were informed it would be so again at the coming of the Lord, and for this very reason, "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. ii. 10–12.) Still, the door is open; still, in boundless grace, forgiveness of sins is preached to thee. But, oh, beware, to-day the church may be taken to meet the Lord in the air, and the day of mercy

may be past for ever. In righteousness, no longer mercy, God may then harden thy heart as He in righteousness hardened the defiant Pharaoh. Is it nothing that thou perish for ever in everlasting fire?

How vast the difference, then, between the hope of the church, as plainly taught these young converts in the days of Lydia, and the sudden and terrible judgments that shall follow! This is a point, however, greatly overlooked in modern times, even by those who profess to believe in the coming of our blessed Lord. The coming of the Lord to receive His saints was placed first, and distinct from His coming in judgment, called "the day of the Lord." Not only is this distinction taught them, in the contrast of chapter iv. 15-18, and chapter v. 1-6, as we have seen; but when they had been troubled by some one, as though the day of the Lord was at hand, or already come, the apostle says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled." (2 Thess. ii. 1, 2.)

Yes, through divine mercy, we who are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, may rest with divine certainty on this and every atom of truth taught thus at the beginning—that the first thing for us, our very future, is the coming of the Lord to receive us unto Himself; then, after

that, the terrible judgments on this rejecting, yet professing, and despising world.

If, then, at the beginning the coming of the Lord was such a glorious part of the gospel of God, is it not so now? And if the effect of that gospel was to turn poor sinners to God, to serve the living and true God, to wean them from all below, and to wait—what a word!—to wait for His Son from heaven, ought it not to be so now? God grant that it may be so more and more—turned to God, weaned from all of Satan's world below, and waiting for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, EVEN JESUS, which delivered us from the wrath to come.



THE DEATH OF THE CROSS.

No. VII.

OUR blessed Lord the Faithful and True Witness, found no rest here, had not where to lay His head, and His path of perfect obedience to the will of God led only to death, even the death of the cross; is it, then, strange that the faithful now so constantly prove this to be a region of disappointment to natural expectations, and that those who are obedient to the word of God should find the path so frequently one of death and resurrection? Has it not been the case all through this sin-stricken time? Did not God promise Abram a son? And did not year after year pass, till all human hope

of its fulfilment had gone? But Abram proved the faithfulness of Him who raiseth the dead. Again, when the great apostle of the Gentiles had sure guidance for taking the gospel into Europe, did he find the path smooth and easy, according to human calculation? Far from it. He and Silas soon found the cruel thongs scourging their backs, and the hours of midnight passing while their feet were made fast in the stocks of an inner prison; but, with aching limbs, they prayed and sang praises to God, because they knew that the divinely-ordered path in a world of evil must be one of death and resurrection. We know what abundant streams of blessing afterwards accompanied their ministry. Is it, then, to be wondered at that we find the inspired apostle saying, "We which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh"? (2 Cor. iv. 11.)

The death of the cross is also set before us in scripture to encourage our confidence in God in faith and prayer. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) Again, while contemplating Him who trod the path of faith perfectly, and resisted unto blood, striving against sin—the Beginner and Finisher of faith—we are directed to Him who is now on the throne for sustainment, and are assured that His grace is sufficient for us. We may also

learn the secret of turning the bitter we find in the wilderness into sweet, by associating it with the death of the cross in all its perfectness and grace ; and, compared with His sorrows, we learn to speak of our heaviest trials as “ light afflictions.”

It is not to be wondered at that efforts have, every now and then, been put forth by our adversaries, to undermine the doctrine of the cross, seeing how infinitely He there glorified God, and that all our blessings are founded on it. This has sometimes been done by going back to principles of Judaism, or by the Galatian error of appending something supplemental to the work of Christ for security ; or, at other times, by attacking the personal glory of the Saviour, and thereby invalidating the infinite and eternal value of His finished work. Well has it been said long ago, “ If the foundations be destroyed, what [can the righteous do ?”

With the spiritually-minded, the true doctrine of the cross is never lost sight of, and that, not only because all our blessings are founded on it, but because of the full outflow of divine love to us there manifested, even when we were yet sinners, and the infinite perfections which there so wonderfully culminated. In the apostles’ writings, we cannot fail to notice how frequently their inspired thoughts recur to the death of the cross, and this sometimes again and again within the compass of a few verses. And, in days of old, when God was

speaking by types and shadows, how constantly the many sacrifices remind us of the one sacrifice of the death of Christ ; and so in the last writer of holy scripture, when the Apocalyptic visions are brought before us, the Lamb is most conspicuously set forth every here and there.

While nothing is more clearly taught in scripture than the secret of our strength, blessing, and growth in grace being connected with our having personally to do with Christ in glory, in contrast with the mistaken doctrine of being always at the foot of the cross, yet is it possible to be beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, and be thus changed into the same image from glory to glory, without remembering the death of the cross as the way by which He reached the throne of glory?

The death of the cross is therefore never to be forgotten by us, but to be had in constant remembrance till Jesus comes. The Lcrd's supper tells us this. In it, it is Himself we remember ; His death we announce. Not, as we sometimes hear, that in it we "remember his death," but we remember *Him*. He said, "Do this in remembrance of me." We see Him by faith now crowned with glory and honour, but we *remember* Him in death for us on the cross. It is Himself we remember, the One who loved us, and gave Himself for us ; and this is to be continued "till he come." Oh, the unspeakable wonders and blessedness of "the death of the cross!"

THE YOUNG BELIEVER'S DIFFICULTIES.

No. V.

"WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION."

John. Well, James, have you thought over our last conversation about that scripture, so often quoted by those who defend salvation by works, "Work out your own salvation"?

James. I have, and it is quite clear to me now that it cannot possibly mean that a sinner is to seek to be saved by his own works; for, as you pointed out, the persons addressed were not sinners who needed saving, but saints in Christ Jesus. And if in Christ, they were saved, justified, accepted, perfected, and this was made certain to the end, as the apostle said, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." I would then repeat my question, How were the Philippians, unitedly, and as individuals, to work out their own salvation? and what is the instruction now to those who desire to do the will of God in these matters?

John. In both cases the answer will be alike. The great point to them as an assembly was this, that though Paul was no longer with them, God was. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Suppose we go back (and what a privilege that we can!)

through all the long centuries of darkness and superstition, right back to the days when this first assembly was formed in Europe. Let us enter the city of Philippi. We inquire for every denomination or sect now on earth. Not one of them is known there. Not a building, nor a single congregation that answers in the least to modern Christianity. It is the first day of the week, the day on which the Lord arose from the dead. There are two or three grave, but, apparently, happy persons coming up the street. Let us test the present state of things by a few questions to these first saints at Philippi. Would you kindly tell us where we shall find mass being performed in Philippi? Would they not have said, "What is the mass? we never heard of it." Tell them it is a mortal man offering a sacrifice to God for the sins of the living and the dead; with what a shudder would they have replied, We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He offered Himself the one sacrifice for our sins, by which offering He hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified. (Heb. x.) There is no such priest in Philippi. Could you direct us, then, to the National Church, or the Lutheran, or the Presbyterian, or Dissenting church; or the Wesleyan? &c., &c. Would they not have said, We assure you there are no such churches or societies in the place—no, not one? Then tell us, what are you? and whither are you going? They could have said, "We are,

through the riches of the grace of God, saints in Christ Jesus ; our commonwealth is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Strangers, have ye not heard that all believers who have remission of sins are baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body—the one body of which Christ in heaven is the Head ? Do you not know that all sectarianism is condemned as carnality ? We are going to break bread, according to our Lord's request, in whom 'we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.' " And do all Christians do this in Philippi ? " Certainly ; how can they love Jesus if they do not keep His commandments ? Did He not say, 'Do this in remembrance of me' ? and the one loaf, is it not the expression of the one body ? This is very dear to Him, for He died to 'gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.' " " What is your organisation, then ? and to what are you gathered in Philippi ? " " We are gathered to Christ, who has ascended into heaven, the only centre, by the Holy Ghost sent down to abide with us until Jesus comes again. Our organisation and calling are not earthly, but heavenly. We are, though on earth, yet not an earthly, but an heavenly, people."

James. I declare, John, I never thought there was such a contrast between the assembly of God, as formed in the beginning by the Holy Ghost,

and what man has made of a great house of modern profession.

John. But do you not see that we must go back to the very circumstances in which these assemblies were then found, in order rightly to understand the application of these inspired and blessed words to them then, and to us now? And, further, not only were all believers gathered to Christ as one body, members of His body, but also as one building, built on Him, the only foundation. But the whole world was against them, cruelly, violently against them. Now, the same world is actually called christian. The power of Satan, who failed at first to corrupt, was then working to destroy this new thing on earth—the church of God. Now, Satan has his throne in that which bears the name of Christ. (Rev. ii. 13.)

It is not, James, that there was no failure in the church soon after God formed it at the beginning. But though there was failure within, and the world and Satan against them without, yet, when these epistles were written, *there was no centre but the Lord Jesus Christ.* No pope then on earth. The mystery of iniquity was working. Satan tried hard to get in, and present other centres at Corinth. (1 Cor. iii. 3-5.) Clericalism was beginning to shew itself (2 Cor. xi. 13-15), and perhaps more painful to the true servant of Christ than all else. The soul-destroying doctrines of a Judaized Christianity were beginning to do their sad mischief.

(Gal. i. 6-9 ; v. 1-12.) Do you notice, then, James, when all these things were threatening the saints at Philippi, how God caused all things to work for their good? They had stood firm, and obeyed the truth, whilst they had the immense help of the apostle, and his presence amongst them. What a sorrow that he was now a chained prisoner at Rome! How much greater, then, the need of diligence in working out their own salvation with fear and trembling! What foes on every side; what dangers from false teachers getting inside; but all works together for good. "For it is God which worketh in you," &c.

James. Pardon my interrupting you, John; but what about the individual? Suppose a Christian, now, who desires to do that alone which is pleasing to God; and in some rare cases such an one really searches the scriptures, and finds the immense difference between the assembly of God as at the beginning, and the perplexing condition of things all around now, so very contrary to the revealed mind of God; what is he to do?

John. Thank you for the timely pull up. I understand your question to be this: How is a believer, now in the midst of things just as they are, to work out his salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God who worketh in him to will and to do of His good pleasure? I think you will see, James, that whatever is addressed by the Spirit in this epistle to all the saints, the assembly of God,

must also be addressed to each individual member of the body of Christ; and thus this epistle becomes intensely valuable for each individual saint. Men and things may change, but the principles of eternal truth can never change. However men and Satan may have changed the outward character of Christianity, the truth of God remains the same. Let us take any city of Europe now back eighteen hundred and fifty years, and place it twelve miles from Philippi, in the year this epistle was written. In the one city there is the assembly gathered to Christ, every Christian in it owning the one body of Christ, God in them working to will and to do of His good pleasure. In this other city there are many centres of gathering: Christ is dishonoured, the Holy Ghost set aside, every man doing what he thinks best in his own eyes. Now, James, if you knew that the principle on which the saints were gathered at Philippi was of God, and the confusion of the other city was of man, would you have any difficulty as to your own individual duty?

James. That seems clear, any way; for certainly the lapse of eighteen hundred years cannot alter the matter one bit. The question, I see, is, Am I pleasing God, or pleasing myself? Am I doing His will, or my own? But I have not stated my greatest difficulty yet as to the individual, in reference to these assembly matters, as we are on them.

John. Indeed ! Then what is your further difficulty ?

James. I will go back to your illustration of the city of confusion. Suppose the Spirit of God awoke a number of Christians in that city to the glory of the person of Christ, and truly to own the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and to know and own that all believers are baptized into the one body of Christ ; and thus owning Christ alone the true centre, gathered to Him alone, according to the mind of the Spirit—in short, exactly on the same ground as the one assembly at Philippi, Ephesus, and elsewhere , at the same time deeply grieved, and mourning over the ruin that had come in, and feeling the common shame ; of course such a gathering would be a witness of the ruin. Now this is the point, if failure takes place, *even there*, amongst the few gathered to Christ, if there is a low condition of soul, if worldliness comes in, even amongst them, then difference of judgment, and self-will shews itself, should there not be a new rallying-point ? What am I to do then as an individual ?

John. Here, James, every word in this epistle is most precious to the individual, as to his path through this wilderness, and the glory at the end of it, looked at as salvation. A new rallying-point, or a new start, James ; what can you mean ? If you have been gathered to Christ, the only centre, tell me, how can there be another centre ?

There was much failure in the church during the lives of the apostles ; but did they direct the saint to seek another centre whilst the true Christ was the true centre ? If this great truth is held, independency, whether corporate or individual, is simply impossible. The planets could as soon be independent of the sun as their centre, as a body of Christians, being scripturally gathered, be independent of that only true centre—Christ. It is a great fact that the Holy Ghost has again gathered to Christ, the only centre. It is also a fact that there can be no new or other centre. Let us carefully remember, in this day, then, that men and things have changed—so changed, that if one of the first believers were to be permitted to visit any city in Europe now, he would not be able to understand the confusion he would find. Yet still, just think now, Christ is the only true centre. The Holy Ghost is still on earth—all believers form the one body of Christ. Let us not forget these blessed facts. “ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ : from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth,” &c.

James. I am really thankful ; my difficulty is met where the true Christ is held as the only centre of gathering ; there is my place as an individual believer. Bless the Lord, O my soul, I need no other centre than Christ.

John. The Lord keep us walking softly, with fear and trembling, working out our own salvation, remembering, however adverse the circumstances, it is God that worketh in us. The night is far spent. May each one, like Gideon's little company, shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life. Nothing could be more refreshing to our souls than to meditate on this Epistle in detail, for our individual path through this world ; but, for the present, James, we must here close.

DRIFTING—RESCUED.

DRIFTING.

REVELATION XVII. 15.

I SAILED forth upon a sea of light,
Whose mimic waves were dancing up and down,
Breathing sweet music ; while their beauty grew
Into my heart, and filled my eyes, till all
Around seemed dark and colourless beside
Their gladsome gleam. And so they lured me on,
On to that brilliant sea from whence they sprung,
And so I sailed

Away from all the landmarks of the past.
Away from all the sweet home-memories.
But as I gazed upon those forms of light,
And heard the sounds of mirth which ever fell,
Fresh from the laughing voices of the crowd
Who sailed as I did, o'er that sparkling sea,
I said, " My heart has found reality ;
Has found the source of happiness down here"—

And so I sailed.

Meanwhile the home-lights faded from my view,
And as an outline the receding shore
Grew dim, and ever more unreal to me—
Unreal its sorrows and its passing joys,
More real the waves which leaped to kiss the sun
With brilliant crimson lips ; while still it shone.

But even as I spoke

Their colour faded. And I saw the source
 From whence they drew it, also died away.
Hid by the evening fog, which rolling up
 Obscured the pathway I had lately sailed.
 And now the light had faded from my life;
 Fleeting and fickle as the laughing waves,
 Which sparkled only in a borrowed gleam;
 And now the light has gone from them and me,
 And I was drifting—drifting helplessly—
 Drifting, I knew not where. For when I sought
 To guide my course by some more certain way,
 No chart, no rudder had I. And I called
 In vain to those who like myself had sailed
 So confidently o'er that sparkling sea.
 No answer had I; but I heard at times
 One voice which seemed with confidence to boast:
 “I’ve found a light,” he said, “I’ll steer by this.”
 But even as he spoke his light went out.
 Nor had it pierced the impenetrable gloom
 Which lay around us. Then my heart uprose
 In wild rebellion. “Oh! ye blinded guides
 Why in my blindness have I followed you?”
 But no reply was given. And still I felt
 That in the darkness I was drifting on.
 Drifting o'er sullen waves which round me moaned
 Like sighs which break from hearts that throb with pain.

And now alone

In darkness and in pain, I drifted on.
 No guide—no comforter—no voice to cheer
 With calm, sweet words of confidence and faith.
 All dark uncertainty, all vague distrust.
 And I had known a Father’s joyous home—
 The peace, and sweetness of a mother’s kiss—
 The loving counsel of a faithful friend—
 But turned from all; and bartered all for this!
 Then through the midnight darkness and the storm
 My heart cried out in its great agony,
 “If there be light, my God! oh, give me light!
 Send me a gleam across the waves to-night.
 That I, at length, before too late retrace
 My course to that fair shore of quiet faith
 I left so long ago!”

RESCUED.

Psalm cxi. 19, 20.

Then even as I cried, a voice
 Well known and often heard in by-gone years,
 A voice more sweet than any earthly tone,
 Whose whisper thrilled me like a living touch,
 Fell on my ears above the stormy sounds
 Which surged around ; as though to drown the sound
 Of that sweet voice which said, "I am the Way,
 Return ! return to me, and enter in,
 Home has been desolate without your voice
 Joining the one great family who praise
 With happy hearts their Father—theirs and yours—
 And at the feast your vacant place has caused
 Sorrow to shadow e'en that scene of joy !
 Return ! return ! His heart is grieving still,
 Over the one who disbelieved His love ;
 Over the one who coldly turned from all,
 The sweetness He would willingly have poured
 Into thy life, had it been lived with Him.
 Return ! He waits for thee. And see the dawn
 Already gilds the eastern sky with light."

"I will arise and go."

E'en though the way
 Of my return be dark, and stormy too,
 I surely merit it, for I have strayed
 So far from Him that my return must be
 Through dark and stormy waters. But at least
 I have His promise of a morning light,
 I have His promise of a welcome home !

"I will arise and go ;"

But even as I spoke the heavy mist
 Which lay around me lifted. And I felt
 My vessel grating on the well-known shore.
 Bathed in the golden sunlight of the morn ;
 Bright with a peace the sea had never shewn,
 E'en when it sparkled most.

And round me thrown

I felt the pressure of my Father's arms,
 The peace and warmth of His forgiving love,
 A wondrous wealth of blessing in His kiss !

A. S. O.



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